MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE UNCANNY X-MEN®

VOLUME 10

THE UNCANNY X-MEN Nos. 176-188
& MAGIK Nos. 1-4
CHRIS CLAREMONT & JOHN ROMITA JR.
WITH BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH & JOHN BUSCEMA

MARVEL

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PRESENTS

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

VOLUME 10

COLLECTING

THE UNCANNY X-MEN Nos. 176-188

& MAGIK Nos. 1-4

CHRIS CLAREMONT • JOHN ROMITA JR.

WITH BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH & JOHN BUSCEMA

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INTRODUCTION
BY CHRIS CLAREMONT

To the audience today, John Romita Jr. stands at the top of the artistic peak. In his career, he's been responsible for presenting the stories of the signature characters of each of the "Big Two" American comic book publishers with a unique power and story-telling grace.

But it wasn't always that way…

Way back in the day, when he got his start, he was a talented kid whose very name made clear that he had a seriously tough act to follow—because his father was John Romita, who was not only Marvel's Art Director but had, working with Stan Lee, helped visually define and popularize *The Amazing Spider-Man* as much as Steve Ditko. (Not to mention the fact that his Mom, Virginia, was Marvel's Production Manager, responsible for keeping both writers and artists on their toes so that the work could come in on time. Basic rule of thumb around the office back then, never mess with Virginia.)

Add to that the fact that when John became *The Uncanny X-Men*'s artist, the book was not simply an established commercial and critical success, it was fast en route to becoming one of the defining titles in the comics industry. At that point, getting on towards the hundredth issue of (*New*) *Uncanny X-Men*, the book had only three regular pencilers: series co-creator Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, and Paul Smith, all three of them industry legends. To say these represented huge acts to follow is the barest understatement.

Thing is, JRJR's been facing that kind of challenge right from the moment he picked up a pencil and started to draw. He was not only used to it, even back then, he seemed to thrive on it.

His first excursion into the world of the X-Men came in 1980, with *X-Men Annual #4* "Nightcrawer's Inferno." The writer figured it was time to go into the past of Kurt Wagner's life and just for the fun of it, do so using the story structure of Dante's *Inferno* (the classic 14th century epic poem by Dante Alighieri.) It was also a great excuse to team-up the X-Men with another of his favorite characters, Stephen Strange (better known perhaps as Doctor Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts.) John did then what we all quickly came to realize was what he did best: he rose to the challenge with a vengeance and aced it. End result, a story that's as much fun to look at today as it was when the pencils were first delivered.

So, in 1983, when the time came to choose the new penciler for *Uncanny*, John was our go-to guy—and not simply because of his skills as an artist. He'd come up through Marvel's in-house trenches, honing his craft by working art corrections on-staff; he learned the hard way both what went into making comic books (and by positive extension, what made them visually exciting) and also the necessity of meeting deadlines. Thanks to his parents he'd been given a unique perspective into the comics publishing world, both as art (i.e. how to present stories with great visuals) and as craft (i.e. the need to get the work in on time and how to do so.)

A classic exemplar of both came right off the bat. *Uncanny X-Men* #175, the conclusion of Scott Summer's romance with Madelyne Pryor, was a double-sized issue that was in danger of missing its publication deadlines. To avoid that disaster, John was brought in at the last minute finish the book—penciling the wedding of Scott and Madelyne. And he did it, in record time.

Problem was, the next issue was due out a month later. Which meant, basically, at the same time he was scrambling to complete the giant-size, he also had to got to work on the newlyweds' honeymoon (#176), wherein Scott spirits his bride away aboard a classic Grumman Goose amphibian (sea plane). Not as visually eloquent perhaps as Scott's proposing on the observation deck of a 20-mile-long starship with the full Earth looming right outside the window, but a whole lot more excitingly down to earth. Less *Star Wars*, more *Indiana Jones*—but still very cool Harrison Ford in his prime! It's a fun honeymoon, if you don't notice the storm, the busted engine, the crash landing in the mid-Pacific, the big shark, and the giant octopus.

Over subsequent issues (i.e. the ones collected here, which constitute roughly the first half of John's work on *Uncanny*), John presented the usual catalogue of X-Men crises as the team dealt with adversaries like Arcade and Mystique, the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants and the Morlocks, Selene, and the Dire Wraiths. Pretty much right off the bat, the team was swept away, as were many other Marvel heroes, into a Secret War, which was to have lasting repercussions for both the team and the Marvel Universe.

John handled stories that were goofy, such as the X-Men's surprise visit to Japan (#181), complete with a giant dragon—much to the delight of a clutch of Japanese school-kids who are able to add a brand-new creature to their "child's guide to monsters that terrorize and devastate Japan." He embraced heartfelt drama—such as Rogue's heart-breaking solo-story (#182) and Colossus, closing out a character arc begun during *Secret Wars*, breaking up with Kitty (#183). That was a devastating moment for her and the issue also gave John the opportunity to draw Juggernaut, a villain whose massive power he conveyed like no one else, and who he would return to in *Uncanny* #194 for one of the coolest-ever opening scenes.

I dwell on details because they represent so much of what makes John's work a delight. As I said, he can do drama and action as well—some might say, even better—than his old man (which is saying a *lot*!) but he can also infuse those stories with purely human moments that put the action in context and help make both stories and characters come that much more alive for the readers. The Juggernaut story ends in a big fight that devastates a Manhattan bar. Juggernaut is furious: all he wanted was a relaxing night on the town and it got ruined by this stupid Russian super hero. (By the way, being a decent fella—even if he is a super-villain—he reimburses the bar owner for all the damage.) Colossus is left to wonder why his friends, Nightcrawler and Wolverine, who were also present, didn't pitch in and help. For Wolverine, it's simple. Actions have consequences. We're part of a team, we care for our friends, we stand by one another; we don't break their hearts and walk away. From Logan's perspective, both Colossus and Kitty are still basically kids; they have a lot of growing up to do. Whether they like it or not, being the oldest on the team, he intends to show them the way—and as far as he's concerned, they'd better listen.

The next seminal moment for the team is the arrival of Rachel Grey, the daughter of Jean Grey. How can this be, you might wonder, given that Jean died in *Uncanny X-Men #137* and that Rachel comes back from the future? That's a mystery for later; what mattered is that she was here, essentially the last mutant survivor of the future presented in "Days of Future Past." As well in this story, John visually creates one of the team's signature adversaries, Selene, soon to become the Black Queen of the Hellfire Club.

With the following issue, things get worse, as Storm looses her powers and the team finds themselves fighting off both the U.S. government and extra-terrestrial invaders.

And here we have to side-step ever so slightly to bring in the artist responsible for the core of this story, Barry Windsor-Smith. Suffice it to say that he too is one of the supreme story-tellers

of modern comics, whose work not only brought to life Conan the Barbarian but a host of other characters and concepts, both within the Marvel Universe and in stories completely his own. What Barry did here was "Lifedeath," the story of how Ororo first dealt with the loss of her powers, that also ran parallel to the X-Men's ongoing struggle with the Dire Wraiths.

The only thing to say here really is, read the story. That'll tell you far better than I how good Barry is.

In visual storytelling and style, John and Barry are nothing like one-another—yet one hallmark defines them both. They tell their stories by drawing you into the characters and the moments of their lives. The people are in your face, so you can see how they feel and by extension feel both the joy of good moments and the anguish of the bad.

What John excels at is bringing the series down to earth and presenting the team in basic human physical context. They didn't live separate—and by extension, protected—from the world around them, as was often the case over the years with other super-hero teams. The world and its people were in the X-Men's face. It was presented as an immediate, in-your-face reality. And from that intimacy came an exciting power that carried along both characters and readers, from scene to scene, page to page, issue to issue. The team wasn't pretty, in the way that John Byrne's and Paul Smith's issues were, but that didn't make them any less attractive to the readers' eyes. This was visceral storytelling, from the gut and it worked just fine.

An interesting sidebar to the whole Dire Wraith story arc springs forth from the notion that the X-Men didn't live apart from the world around them. In this instance, fighting adversaries whose powers derived in part from magic, the resolution required bringing in friends who's powers were focused more towards the magical realm—Nightcrawler's girlfriend, Amanda Sefton, who we first met in the *X-Men Annual* #4, and Illyana Rasputin, Colossus' young sister, who was a member of the New Mutants, Magik. They pitched in to stand beside the X-Men in the final face-off with the Wraiths.

Which leads us to the stories that frame this *Marvel Masterworks*—Magik's own miniseries and a bonus *Marvel Fanfare* story that focuses on Ororo and Mystique and their overall relationship with Rogue. The former is an origin story, pure and simple—although, truth to tell, neither of those words can be safely applied to Illyana Rasputin. She is anything but "pure" or "simple." As for Ororo's story, its title tells you all you need to know. Indeed, it is all about a "Deal with the Devil." The question is: which of the two women having the discussion/striking the deal, is standing in for Lucifer?

Truth is, though, good as they are those stories are but grace notes. The focus here, and rightly so, is on John. He grabbed hold of *X-Men* and from the first pages he drew made plain to the audience that he was going to present the team in ways it hadn't been seen before.

And a wild ride would be had by all.

2016

MARVEL
FROM THE X-MEN
STORM AND ILLYANA
MAGIK
#1 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
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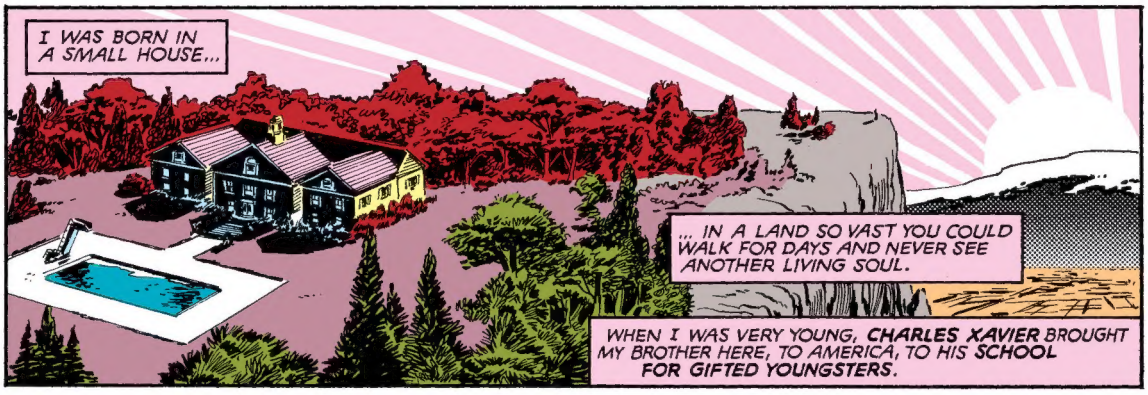
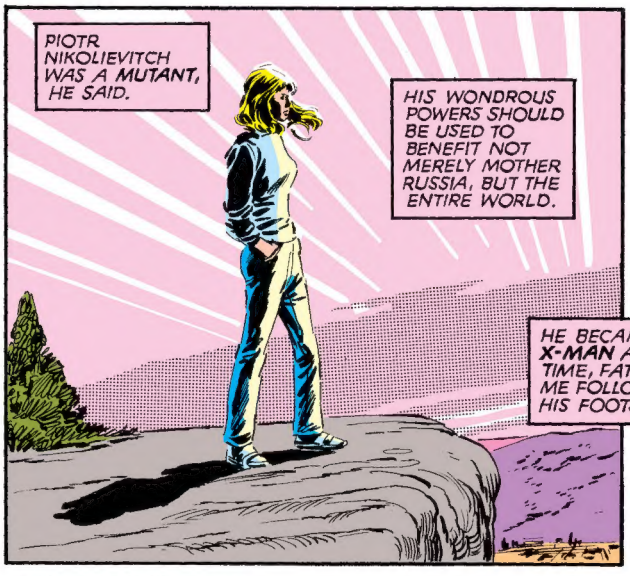
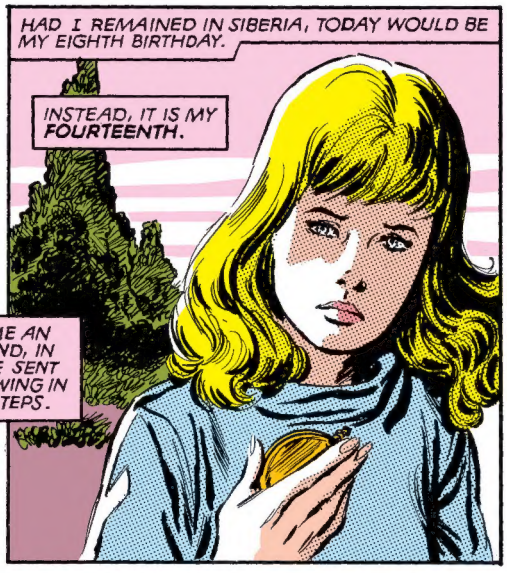
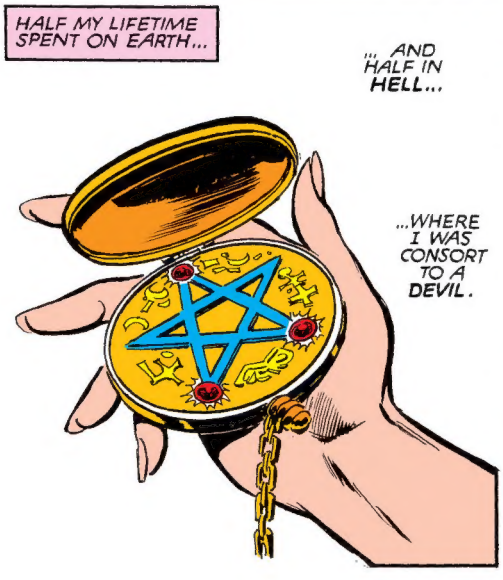
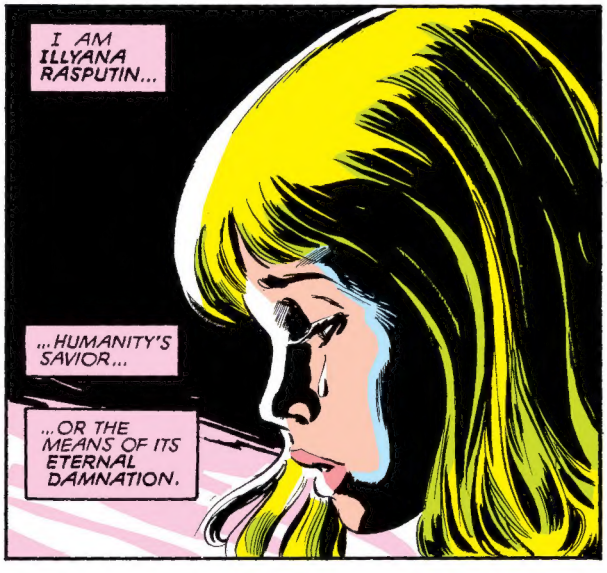

I WAS BORN IN A SMALL HOUSE...
... IN A LAND SO VAST YOU COULD WALK FOR DAYS AND NEVER SEE ANOTHER LIVING SOUL.
WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, CHARLES XAVIER BROUGHT MY BROTHER HERE, TO AMERICA, TO HIS SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.


PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH WAS A MUTANT, HE SAID.
HIS WONDROUS POWERS SHOULD BE USED TO BENEFIT NOT MERELY MOTHER RUSSIA, BUT THE ENTIRE WORLD.
HE BECAME AN X-MAN AND, IN TIME, FATE SENT ME FOLLOWING IN HIS FOOTSTEPS.


HAD I REMAINED IN SIBERIA, TODAY WOULD BE MY EIGHTH BIRTHDAY.
INSTEAD, IT IS MY FOURTEENTH.


HALF MY LIFETIME SPENT ON EARTH...
... AND HALF IN HELL...
...WHERE I WAS CONSORT TO A DEVIL.


I AM ILLYANA RASPUTIN...
...HUMANITY'S SAVIOR...
...OR THE MEANS OF ITS ETERNAL DAMNATION.

Little Girl Lost

GUYS, WILL IT HELP IF I CHANT, "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME?"

HA-FLAMIN'-HA, KIDDO.

HANG ONTO YER HATS, PEOPLE. STORM'S CASTIN' HER SPELL-- HERE WE GO!*

MY BROTHER'S ARMORED SKIN IS ICE-COLD TO MY TOUCH. WE'RE RUNNING FOR OUR LIVES-- THE X-MEN AND ME-- WITH A PACK OF DEMONS HOWLING AT OUR HEELS.

I'VE NEVER BEEN SO FRIGHTENED, BUT I MAKE NO SOUND-- I REFUSE TO CRY-- I DON'T WANT PIOTR TO BE ASHAMED OF ME.

A VOICE ROARS ABOVE THE REST, THAT OF THE MAN WHO BROUGHT ME HERE TO **LIMBO**: THE DEMON-LORD, **BELASCO**.

I'M CONFUSED-- THERE ARE **TWO** ORORROS WITH US, ONE OLD, ONE YOUNG. ONE A SORCERESS, THE OTHER-- RULER OF THE WINDS, LEADER OF THE X-MEN. THEY'RE TOTALLY DIFFERENT, YET THEY'RE THE SAME PERSON...

... COMBINING THEIR POWERS TO PROTECT US FROM BELASCO AND AT THE SAME TIME SEND US SAFELY HOME.

*FOR A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS ON THESE TWO PAGES, SEE X-MEN #160 -- LOUISE.

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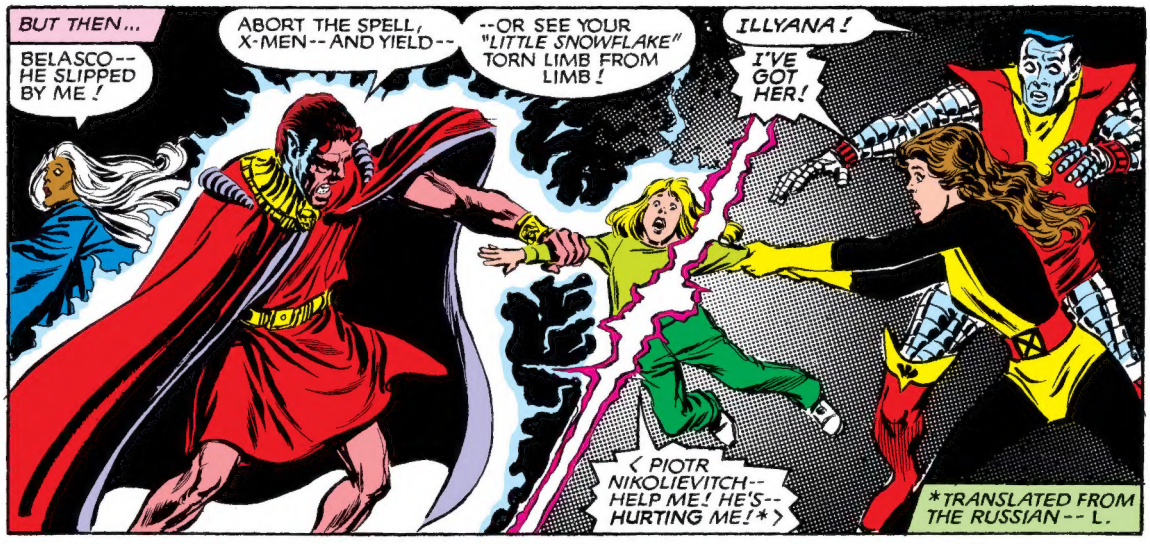
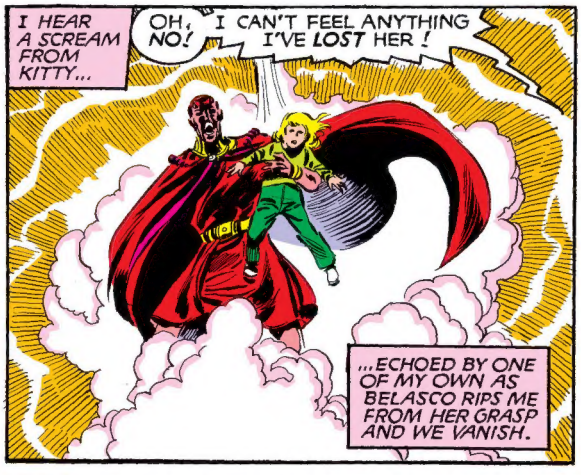
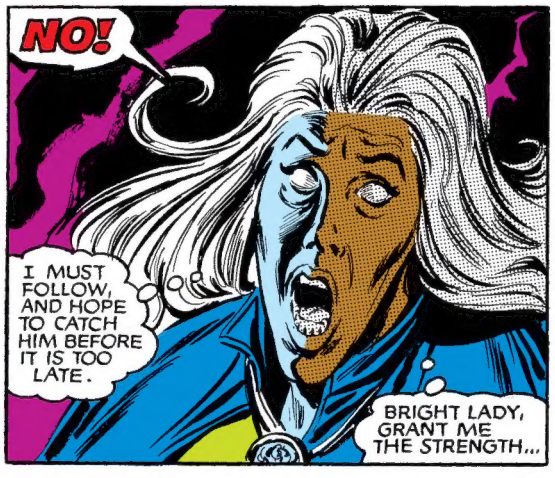
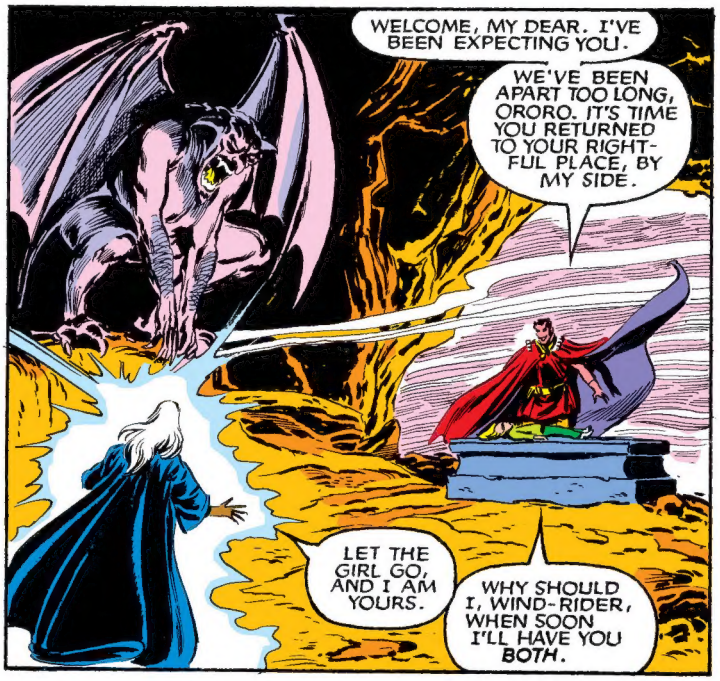

BUT THEN...
BELASCO--HE SLIPPED BY ME!
ABORT THE SPELL, X-MEN--AND YIELD--
--OR SEE YOUR "LITTLE SNOWFLAKE" TORN LIMB FROM LIMB!
ILLYANA!
I'VE GOT HER!
< PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH--HELP ME! HE'S--HURTING ME!* >
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN -- L.

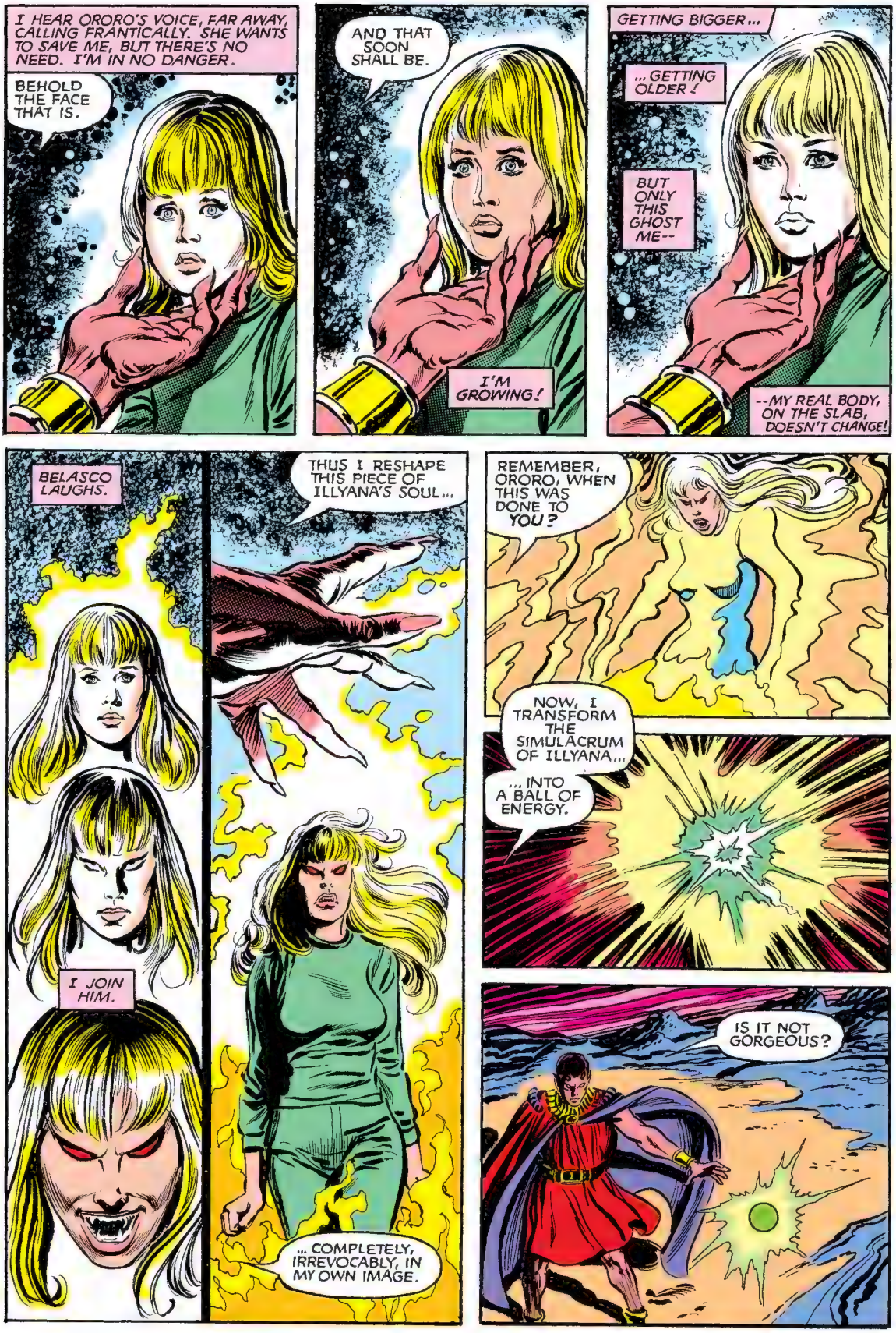

I HEAR A SCREAM FROM KITTY...
OH, NO! I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING I'VE LOST HER!
...ECHOED BY ONE OF MY OWN AS BELASCO RIPS ME FROM HER GRASP AND WE VANISH.


NO!
I MUST FOLLOW, AND HOPE TO CATCH HIM BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.
BRIGHT LADY, GRANT ME THE STRENGTH...

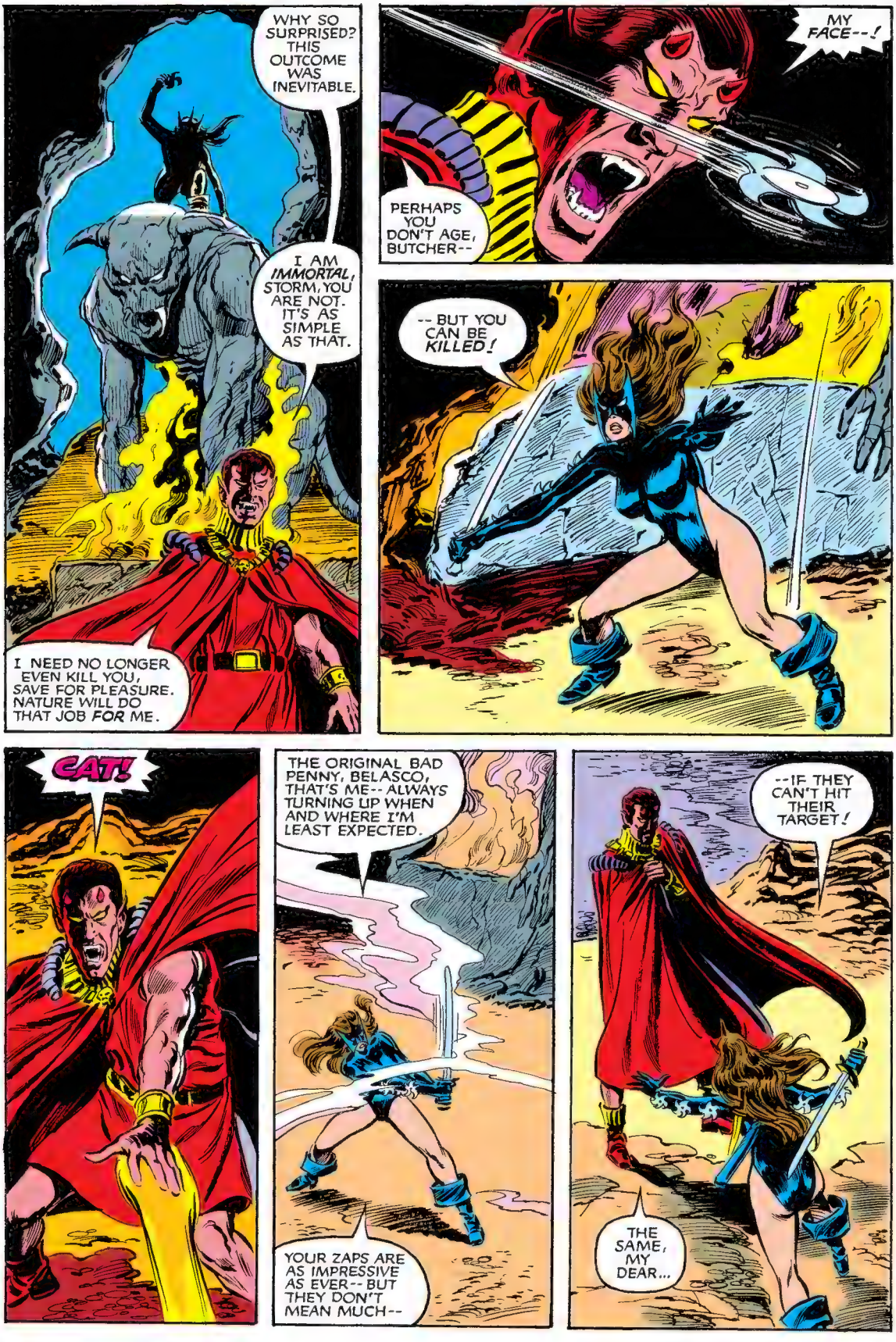
...TO SLAY THE CHILD IF I CANNOT SAVE HER.
NEITHER COURSE WILL BE EASY NOW THAT I AM ALONE, THE X-MEN RETURNED TO EARTH.
BUT I DARE NOT SUMMON THEM BACK -- EVEN IF I COULD -- LEST HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF, AND THE HORRORS THAT BEFELL MY X-MEN HAPPEN TO THEM.

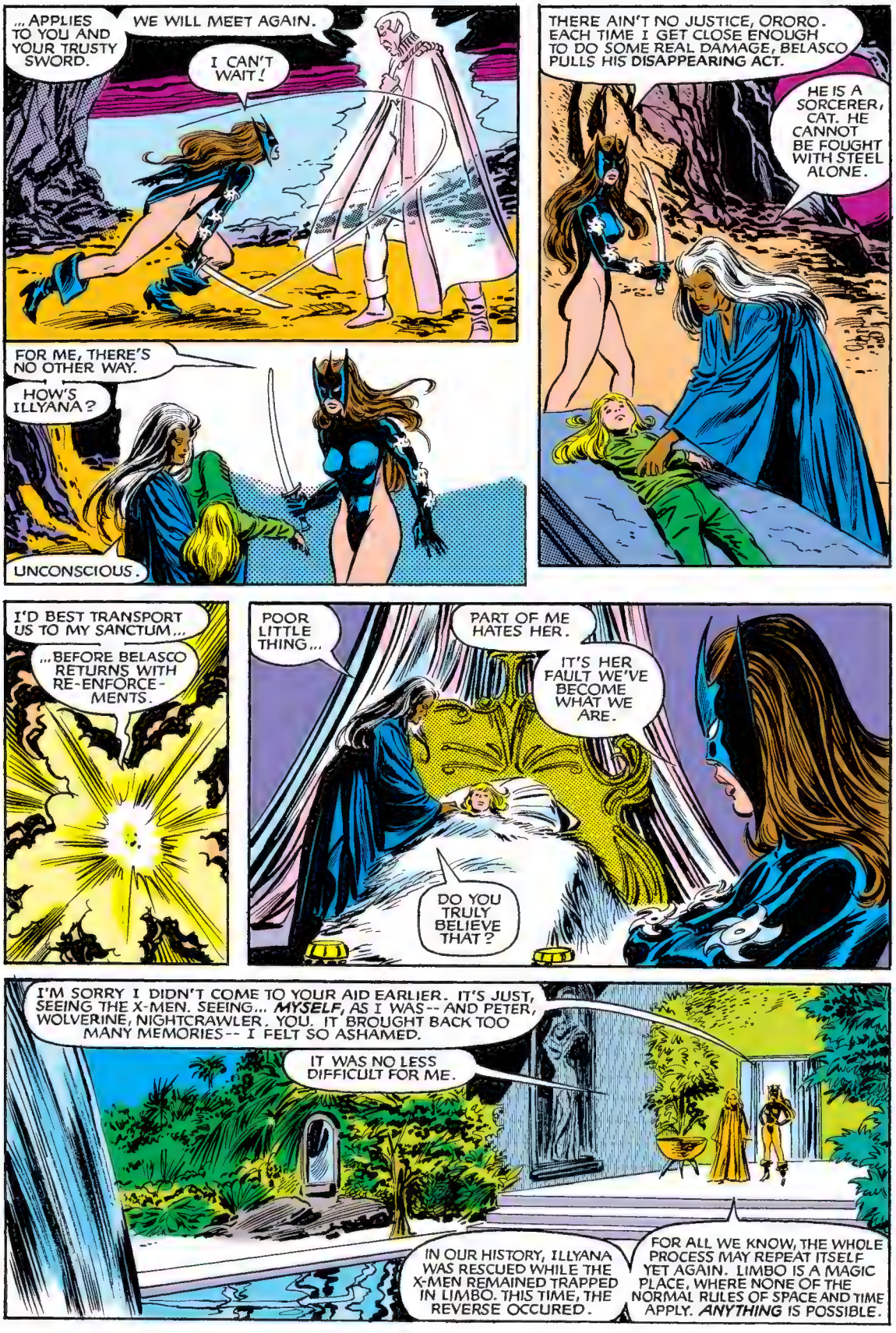

WELCOME, MY DEAR. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
WE'VE BEEN APART TOO LONG, ORORO. IT'S TIME YOU RETURNED TO YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE, BY MY SIDE.
LET THE GIRL GO, AND I AM YOURS.
WHY SHOULD I, WIND-RIDER, WHEN SOON I'LL HAVE YOU BOTH.

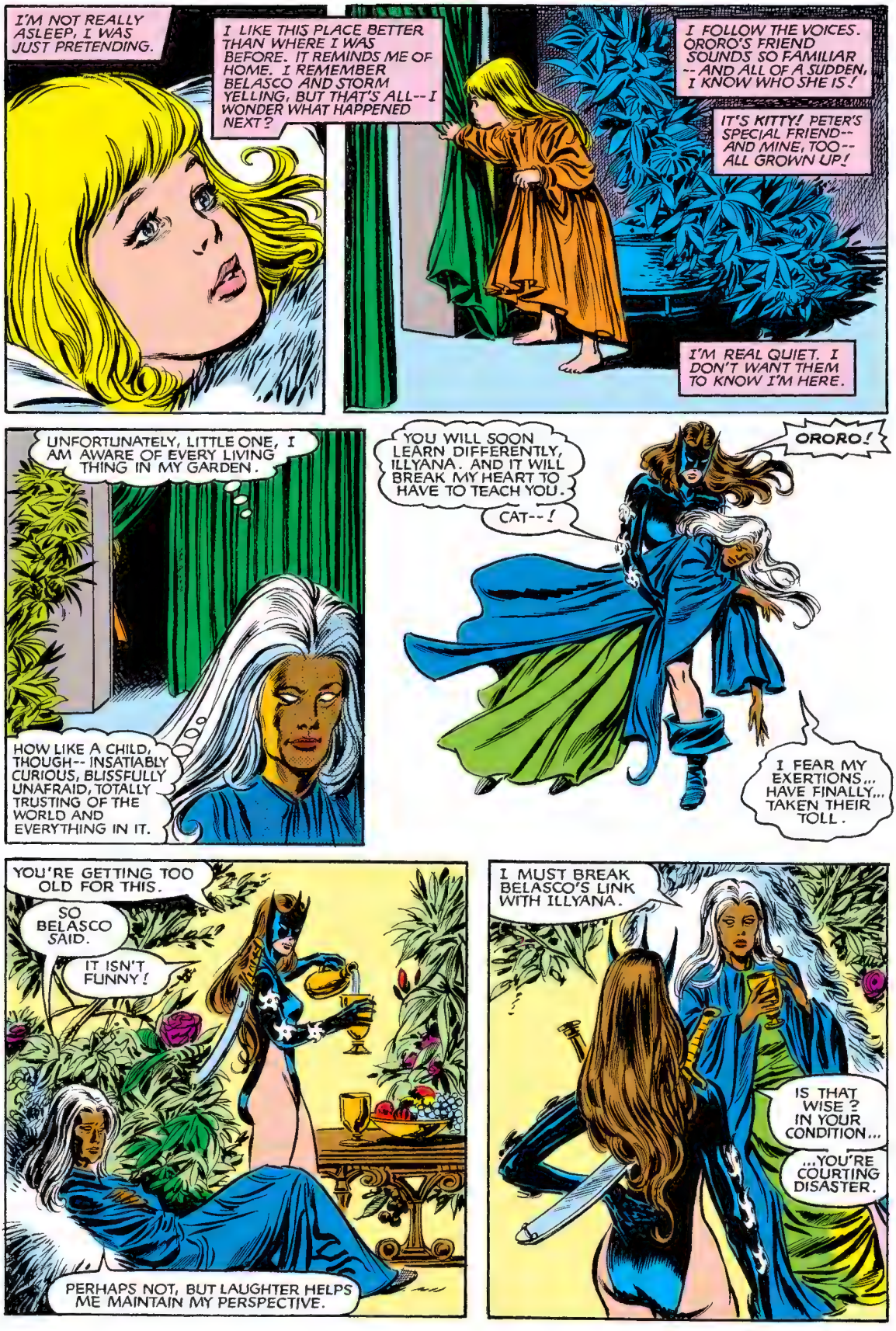
SHE IS DELIGHTFULLY PURE AND UNSPOILED.
EVEN KITTY PRYDE WASN'T THIS INNOCENT WHEN I FINALLY CLAIMED HER.
ILLYANA IS THE PERFECT INSTRUMENT THROUGH WHICH MY MASTERS, THE ELDER GODS, WILL EXTEND THEIR DOMINION FIRST TO EARTH AND THEN TO OUR ENTIRE UNIVERSE!
I WILL NOT ALLOW IT!
EMPTY WORDS, WOMAN.
EVEN IN YOUR PRIME, YOU WERE NO MATCH FOR ME. WHAT HOPE HAVE YOU...
...NOW THAT YOU ARE OLD?
HEED ME, ILLYANA RASPUTIN. THE GRAND AND GLORIOUS DESTINY I PROMISED YOU IS AT HAND!
I LAUGH INSIDE AS I FLY OUT OF MY BODY, I CAN'T HELP MYSELF.
I'M FLOATING THROUGH THE AIR, FREE AS A BIRD. IT'S WONDERFUL!
AND I'M NOT AFRAID ANYMORE--EVEN THOUGH I WISH PIOTR WAS WITH ME. BELASCO'S FACE IS SCARY TO LOOK AT--BUT SO IS NIGHTCRAWLER'S, AND HE'S MY BROTHER'S GOOD FRIEND. BELASCO'S VOICE IS KIND, HIS TOUCH IS GENTLE.
HE WON'T DO ANYTHING BAD TO ME. HE LOVES ME, HE SAID SO.

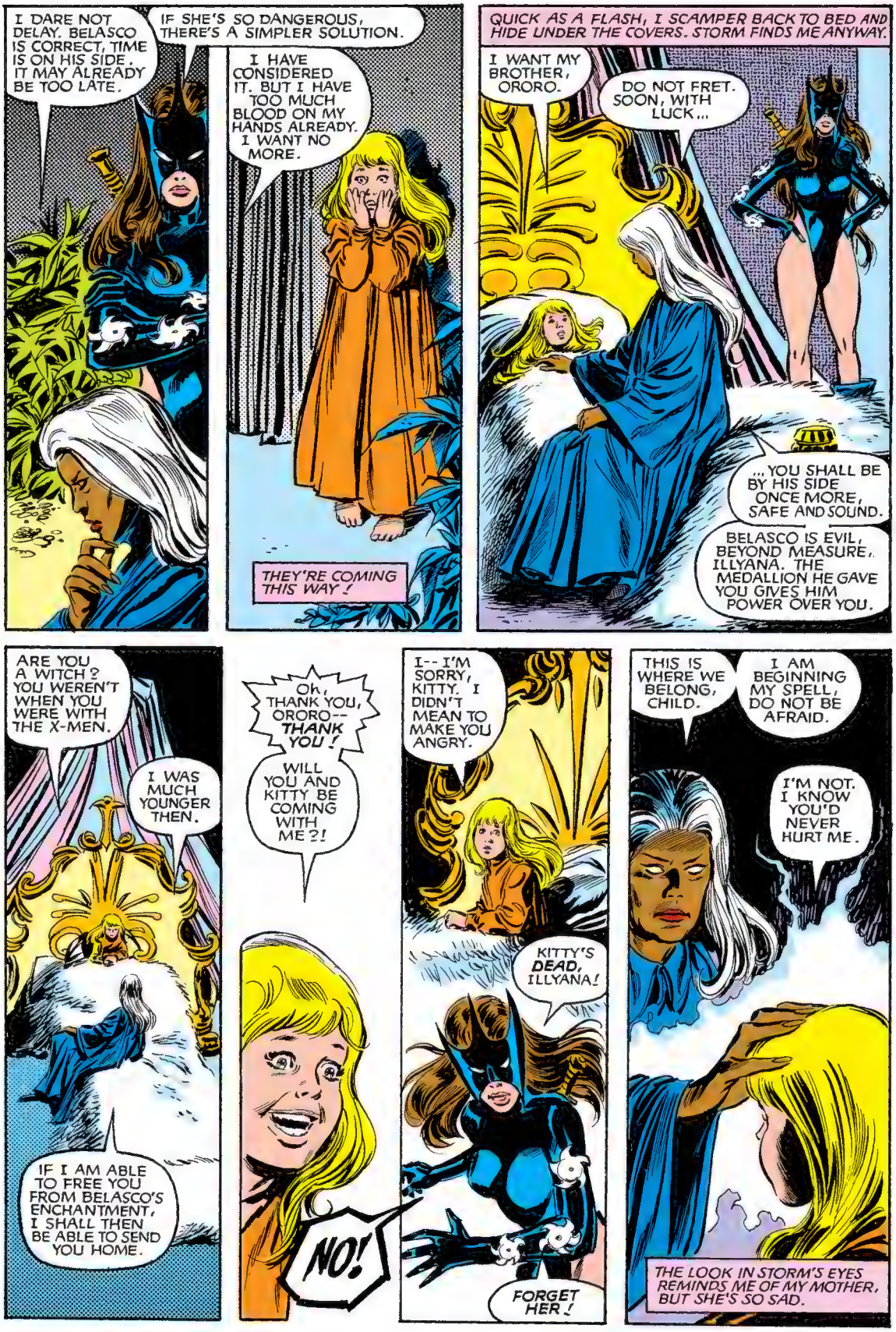

I HEAR ORORO'S VOICE, FAR AWAY, CALLING FRANTICALLY. SHE WANTS TO SAVE ME, BUT THERE'S NO NEED. I'M IN NO DANGER.
BEHOLD THE FACE THAT IS.
AND THAT SOON SHALL BE.
I'M GROWING!
GETTING BIGGER...
...GETTING OLDER!
BUT ONLY THIS GHOST ME--
--MY REAL BODY, ON THE SLAB, DOESN'T CHANGE!
BELASCO LAUGHS.
I JOIN HIM.
THUS I RESHAPE THIS PIECE OF ILLYANA'S SOUL...
...COMPLETELY, IRREVOCABLY, IN MY OWN IMAGE.
REMEMBER, ORORO, WHEN THIS WAS DONE TO YOU?
NOW, I TRANSFORM THE SIMULACRUM OF ILLYANA...
...INTO A BALL OF ENERGY.
IS IT NOT GORGEOUS?

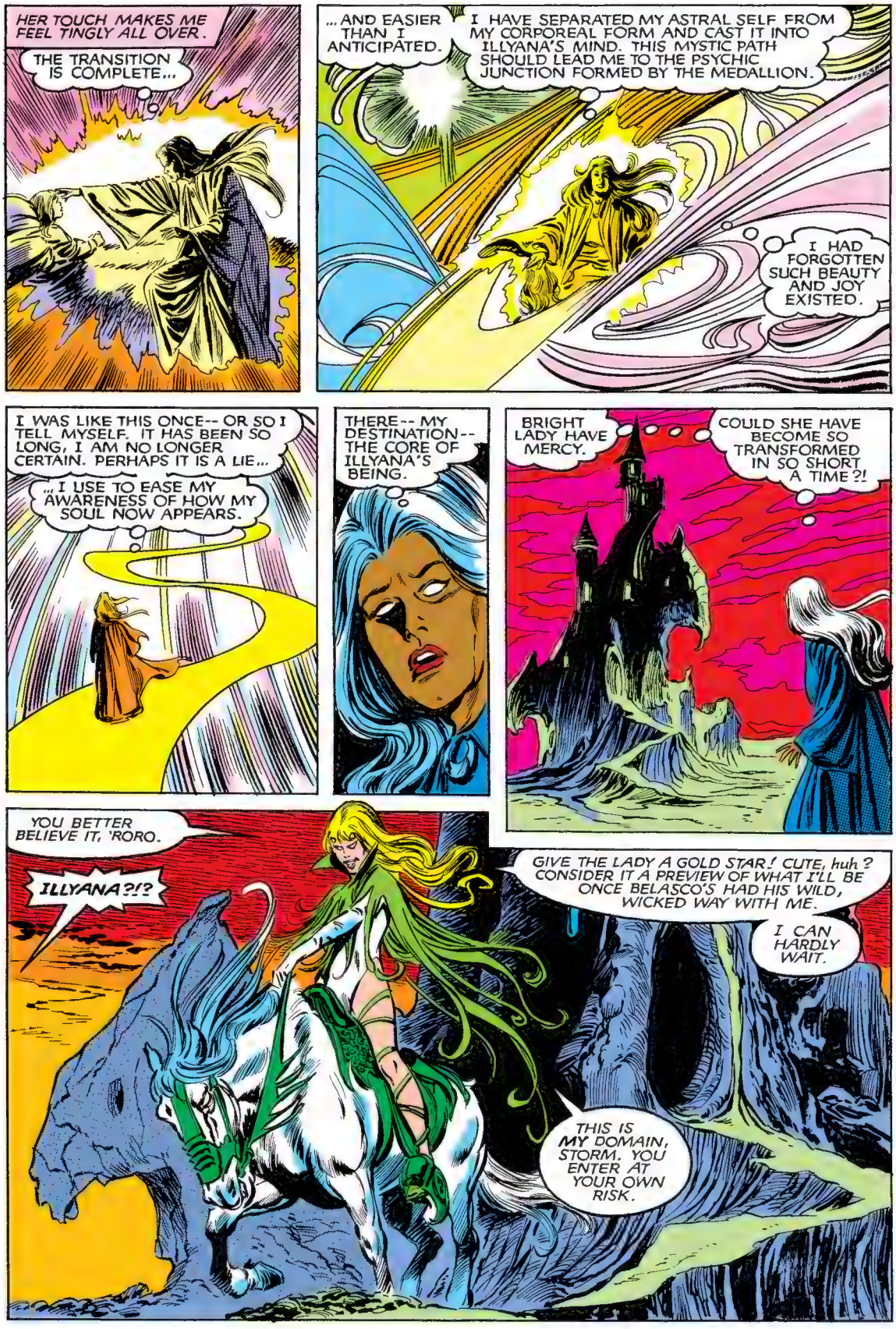
SHE IS BOUND TO ME-- BODY AND SOUL--
--AND THROUGH ME, TO MY DREAD LORDS.
FOREVER. BEHOLD THE FIRST OF FIVE BLOODSTONES.
ONCE EMPLACED, NO POWER ON EARTH CAN REMOVE THEM.
AND WHEN, AT LAST, THE CIRCLE IS COMPLETE, THE DIMENSIONAL WALLS WILL BURST--
--AND THE ELDER GODS WILL COME FORTH!
AAIIIII!!
HOW SAD, WIND-RIDER, THAT YOU WON'T BE ALIVE TO SEE THAT WONDROUS DAY.
EACH... STONE MAKES BELASCO... INCALCULABLY STRONGER. IF HE'S TO BE STOPPED... MUST BE HERE... NOW...
I HAVE THE WILL...
...BUT MY BODY BETRAYS ME-- TOO OLD... TOO... WEAK...


WHY SO SURPRISED? THIS OUTCOME WAS INEVITABLE.
I AM IMMORTAL, STORM, YOU ARE NOT. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.
I NEED NO LONGER EVEN KILL YOU, SAVE FOR PLEASURE. NATURE WILL DO THAT JOB FOR ME.
MY FACE--!
PERHAPS YOU DON'T AGE, BUTCHER--
-- BUT YOU CAN BE KILLED!
CAT!
THE ORIGINAL BAD PENNY, BELASCO, THAT'S ME-- ALWAYS TURNING UP WHEN AND WHERE I'M LEAST EXPECTED.
YOUR ZAPS ARE AS IMPRESSIVE AS EVER-- BUT THEY DON'T MEAN MUCH--
--IF THEY CAN'T HIT THEIR TARGET!
THE SAME, MY DEAR...

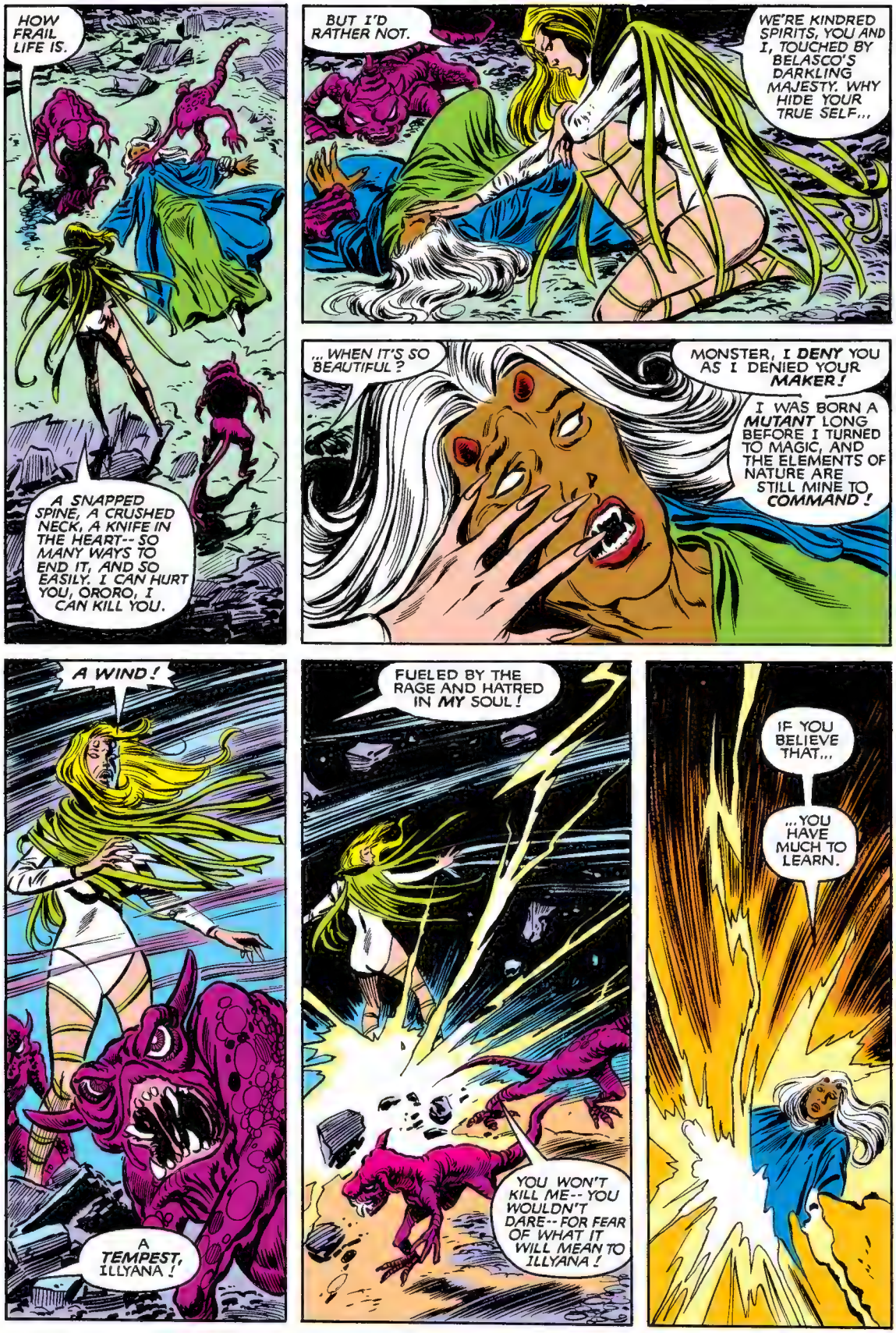

...APPLIES TO YOU AND YOUR TRUSTY SWORD.
WE WILL MEET AGAIN.
I CAN'T WAIT!
THERE AIN'T NO JUSTICE, ORORO. EACH TIME I GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO DO SOME REAL DAMAGE, BELASCO PULLS HIS DISAPPEARING ACT.
HE IS A SORCERER, CAT. HE CANNOT BE FOUGHT WITH STEEL ALONE.
FOR ME, THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.
HOW'S ILLYANA?
UNCONSCIOUS.
I'D BEST TRANSPORT US TO MY SANCTUM...
...BEFORE BELASCO RETURNS WITH RE-ENFORCE-MENTS.
POOR LITTLE THING...
PART OF ME HATES HER.
IT'S HER FAULT WE'VE BECOME WHAT WE ARE.
DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT?
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T COME TO YOUR AID EARLIER. IT'S JUST, SEEING THE X-MEN. SEEING... MYSELF, AS I WAS -- AND PETER, WOLVERINE, NIGHTCRAWLER. YOU. IT BROUGHT BACK TOO MANY MEMORIES -- I FELT SO ASHAMED.
IT WAS NO LESS DIFFICULT FOR ME.
IN OUR HISTORY, ILLYANA WAS RESCUED WHILE THE X-MEN REMAINED TRAPPED IN LIMBO. THIS TIME, THE REVERSE OCCURED.
FOR ALL WE KNOW, THE WHOLE PROCESS MAY REPEAT ITSELF YET AGAIN. LIMBO IS A MAGIC PLACE, WHERE NONE OF THE NORMAL RULES OF SPACE AND TIME APPLY. ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

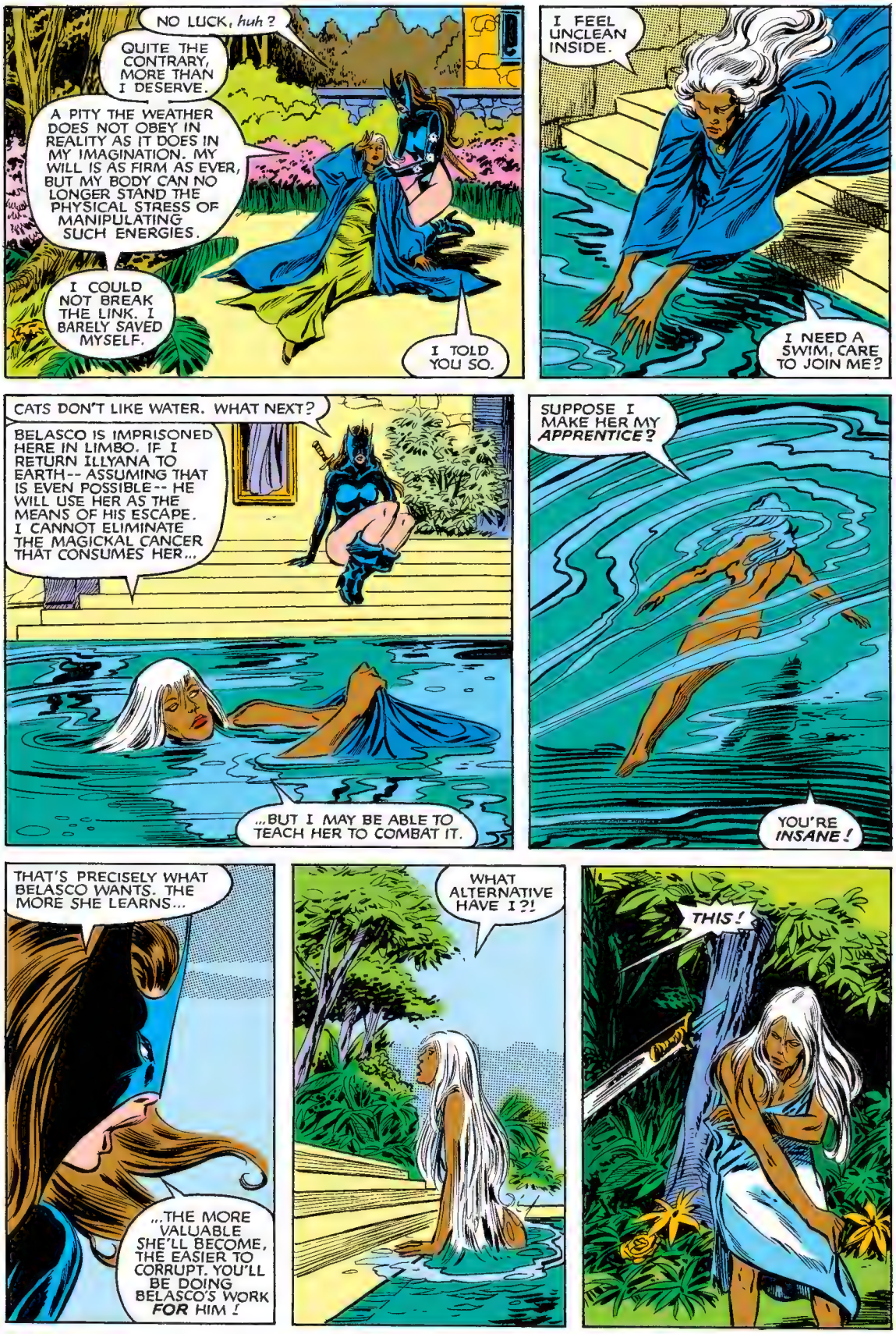

I'M NOT REALLY ASLEEP, I WAS JUST PRETENDING.
I LIKE THIS PLACE BETTER THAN WHERE I WAS BEFORE. IT REMINDS ME OF HOME. I REMEMBER BELASCO AND STORM YELLING, BUT THAT'S ALL-- I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
I FOLLOW THE VOICES. ORORO'S FRIEND SOUNDS SO FAMILIAR -- AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, I KNOW WHO SHE IS!
IT'S KITTY! PETER'S SPECIAL FRIEND-- AND MINE, TOO-- ALL GROWN UP!
I'M REAL QUIET. I DON'T WANT THEM TO KNOW I'M HERE.
UNFORTUNATELY, LITTLE ONE, I AM AWARE OF EVERY LIVING THING IN MY GARDEN.
HOW LIKE A CHILD, THOUGH-- INSATIABLY CURIOUS, BLISSFULLY UNAFRAID, TOTALLY TRUSTING OF THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT.
YOU WILL SOON LEARN DIFFERENTLY, ILLYANA. AND IT WILL BREAK MY HEART TO HAVE TO TEACH YOU.
CAT--!
ORORO!
I FEAR MY EXERTIONS... HAVE FINALLY... TAKEN THEIR TOLL.
YOU'RE GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS.
SO BELASCO SAID.
IT ISN'T FUNNY!
PERHAPS NOT, BUT LAUGHTER HELPS ME MAINTAIN MY PERSPECTIVE.
I MUST BREAK BELASCO'S LINK WITH ILLYANA.
IS THAT WISE? IN YOUR CONDITION...
...YOU'RE COURTING DISASTER.

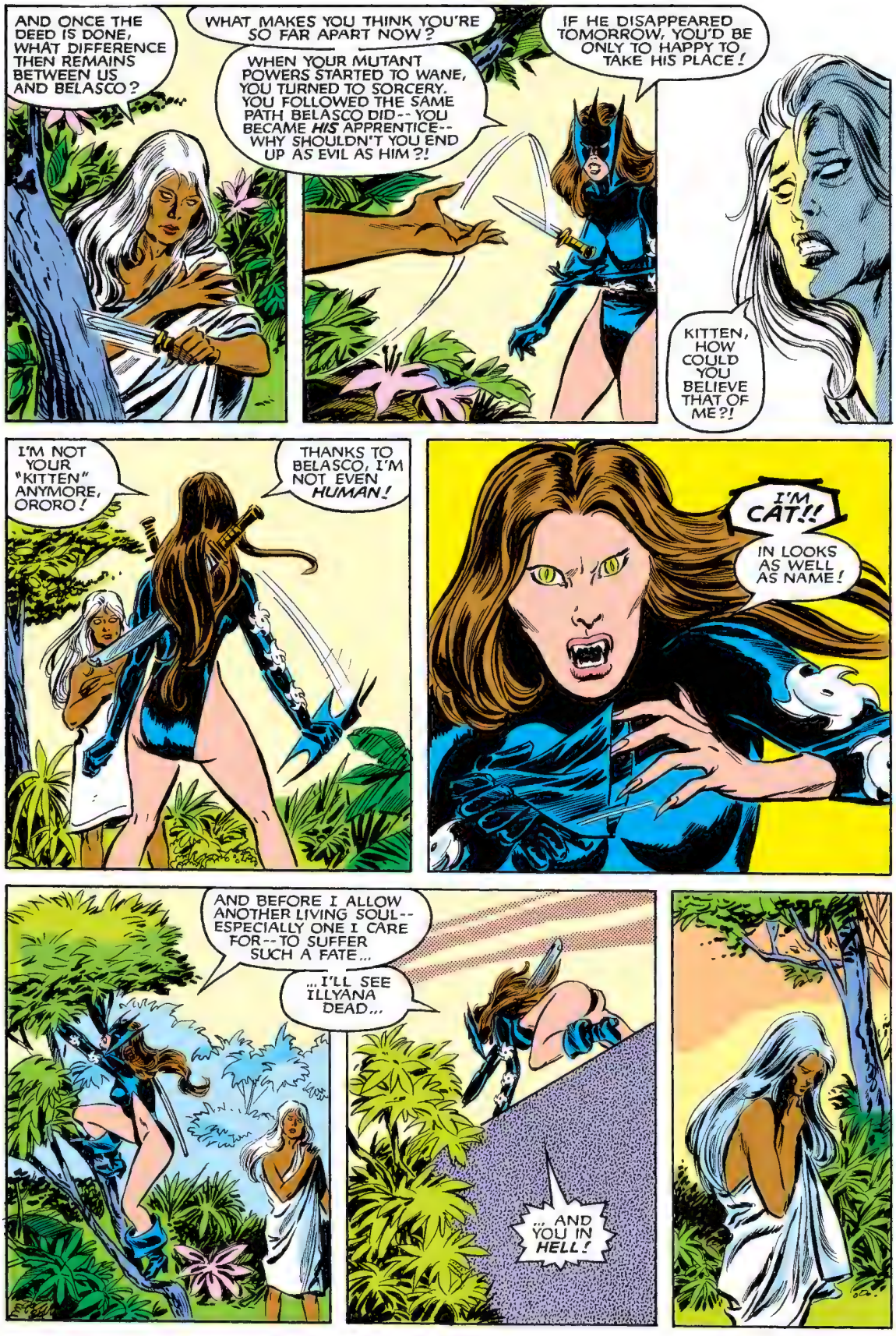

I DARE NOT DELAY. BELASCO IS CORRECT, TIME IS ON HIS SIDE. IT MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE.
IF SHE'S SO DANGEROUS, THERE'S A SIMPLER SOLUTION.
I HAVE CONSIDERED IT. BUT I HAVE TOO MUCH BLOOD ON MY HANDS ALREADY. I WANT NO MORE.
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY!
QUICK AS A FLASH, I SCAMPER BACK TO BED AND HIDE UNDER THE COVERS. STORM FINDS ME ANYWAY.
I WANT MY BROTHER, ORORO.
DO NOT FRET. SOON, WITH LUCK...
...YOU SHALL BE BY HIS SIDE ONCE MORE, SAFE AND SOUND.
BELASCO IS EVIL, BEYOND MEASURE, ILLYANA. THE MEDALLION HE GAVE YOU GIVES HIM POWER OVER YOU.
ARE YOU A WITCH? YOU WEREN'T WHEN YOU WERE WITH THE X-MEN.
I WAS MUCH YOUNGER THEN.
IF I AM ABLE TO FREE YOU FROM BELASCO'S ENCHANTMENT, I SHALL THEN BE ABLE TO SEND YOU HOME.
Oh, THANK YOU, ORORO-- THANK YOU!
WILL YOU AND KITTY BE COMING WITH ME?!
NO!
I-- I'M SORRY, KITTY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE YOU ANGRY.
KITTY'S DEAD, ILLYANA!
FORGET HER!
THIS IS WHERE WE BELONG, CHILD.
I AM BEGINNING MY SPELL; DO NOT BE AFRAID.
I'M NOT. I KNOW YOU'D NEVER HURT ME.
THE LOOK IN STORM'S EYES REMINDS ME OF MY MOTHER, BUT SHE'S SO SAD.

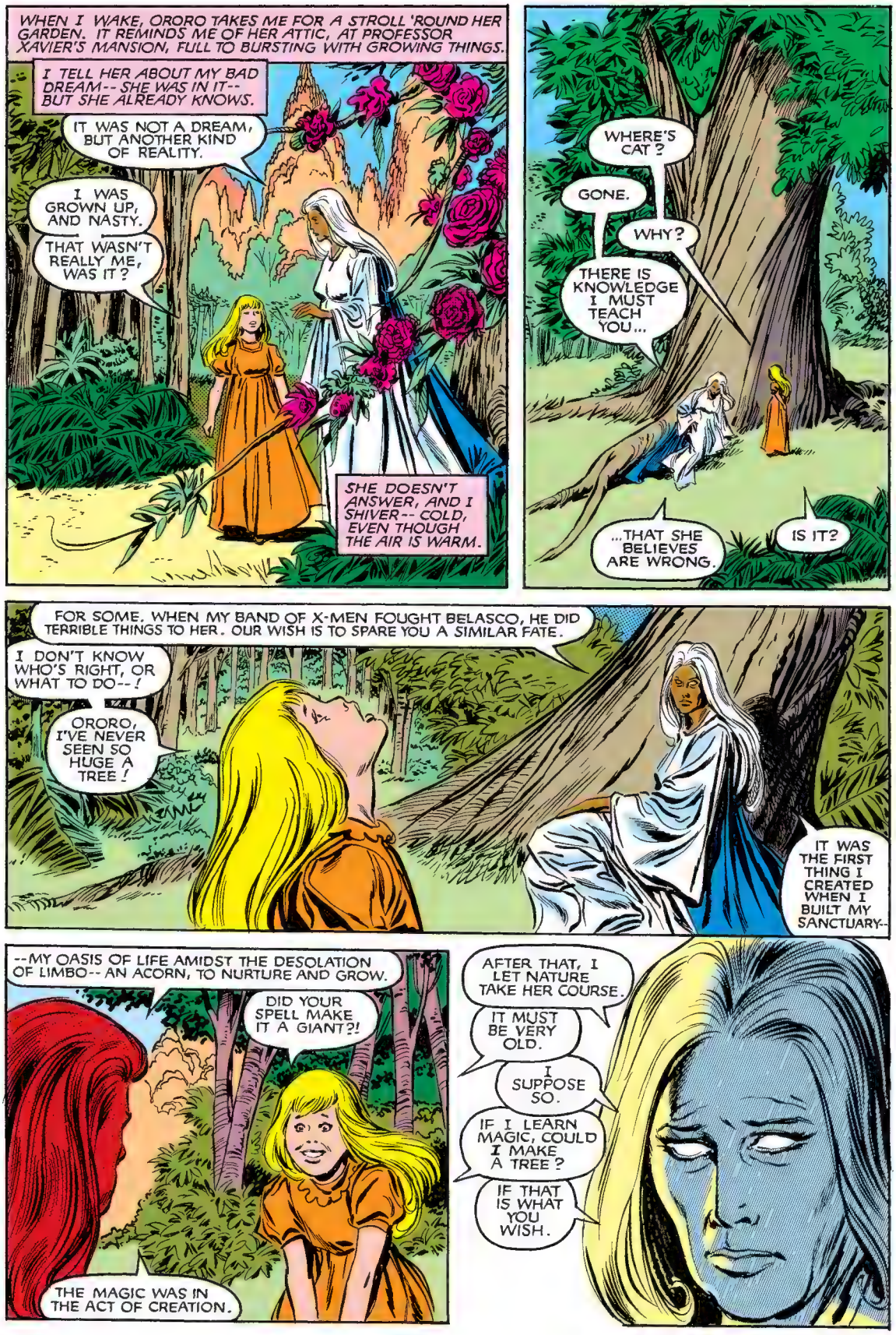

HER TOUCH MAKES ME FEEL TINGLY ALL OVER.
THE TRANSITION IS COMPLETE...
...AND EASIER THAN I ANTICIPATED.
I HAVE SEPARATED MY ASTRAL SELF FROM MY CORPOREAL FORM AND CAST IT INTO ILLYANA'S MIND. THIS MYSTIC PATH SHOULD LEAD ME TO THE PSYCHIC JUNCTION FORMED BY THE MEDALLION.
I HAD FORGOTTEN SUCH BEAUTY AND JOY EXISTED.
I WAS LIKE THIS ONCE-- OR SO I TELL MYSELF. IT HAS BEEN SO LONG, I AM NO LONGER CERTAIN. PERHAPS IT IS A LIE...
...I USE TO EASE MY AWARENESS OF HOW MY SOUL NOW APPEARS.
THERE-- MY DESTINATION-- THE CORE OF ILLYANA'S BEING.
BRIGHT LADY HAVE MERCY.
COULD SHE HAVE BECOME SO TRANSFORMED IN SO SHORT A TIME?!
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT, 'RORO.
ILLYANA?!?
GIVE THE LADY A GOLD STAR! CUTE, huh? CONSIDER IT A PREVIEW OF WHAT I'LL BE ONCE BELASCO'S HAD HIS WILD, WICKED WAY WITH ME.
I CAN HARDLY WAIT.
THIS IS MY DOMAIN, STORM. YOU ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK.

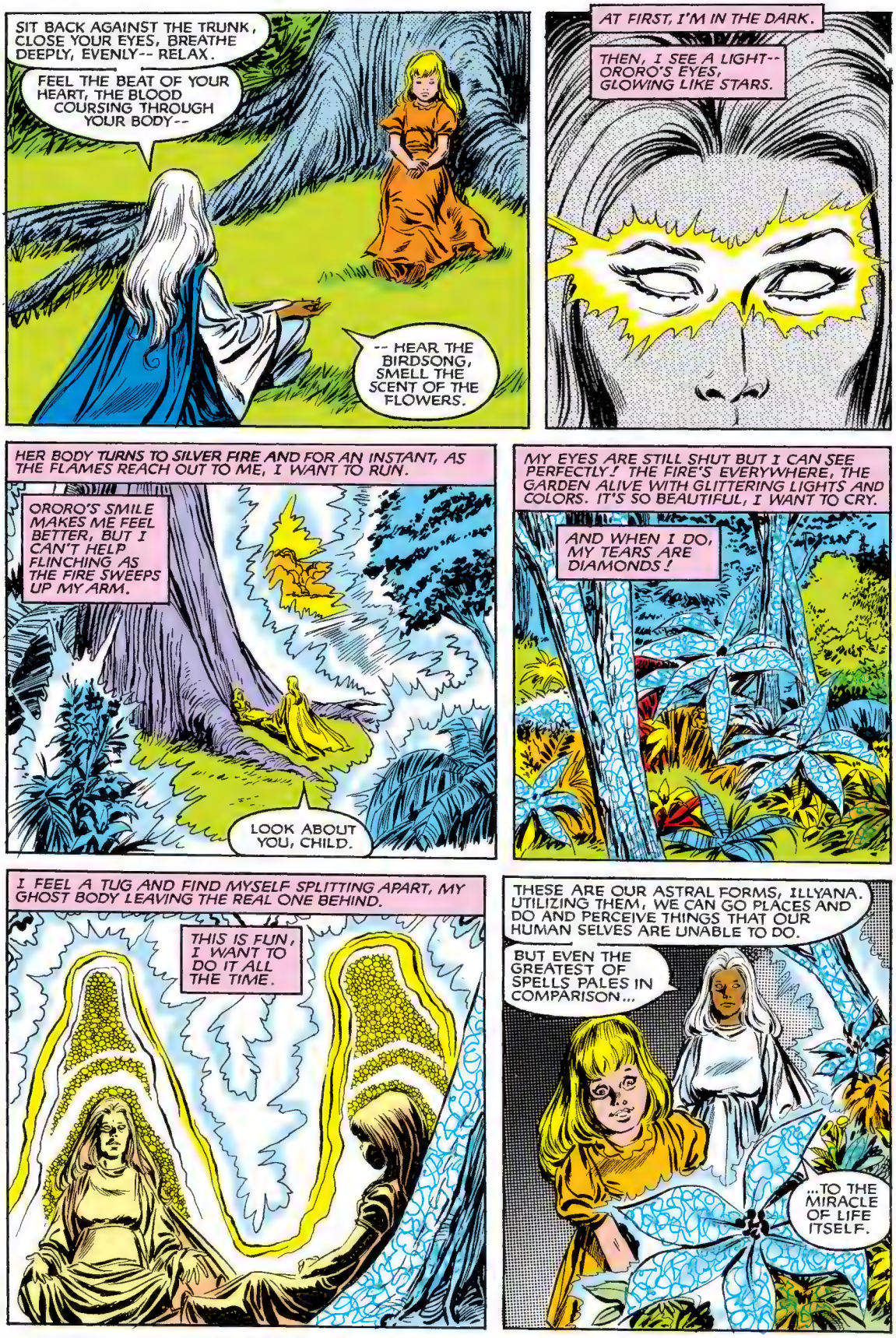
THAT, CHANGELING, REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
NICE MOVE.
HOW'S THIS FOR A RESPONSE?
HER WHIP--ATTACKING OF ITS OWN VOLITION, AS IF IT IS ALIVE, A PART OF ILLYANA!
CHOKING ME--BARBS TEARING AT MY THROAT! IF MY ASTRAL FORM IS SLAIN...
...MY BODY DIES AS WELL.
FORTUNATELY, I HAVE A FEW TRICKS LEFT.
THE WHIP CAN KILL. FLOWERS CANNOT.
I UNDERESTIMATED BELASCO. HIS BLOODSTONE GIVES ILLYANA'S CORRUPTED PERSONA SORCEROUS POWER EQUAL TO MINE.
WERE YOU FRESH AND HEALTHY --AND YOUNG--
--THIS MIGHT BE A FAIR FIGHT.
DEMONS!
MY SPELLS HAVE NO EFFECT. I CANNOT BREAK THEIR GRIP!

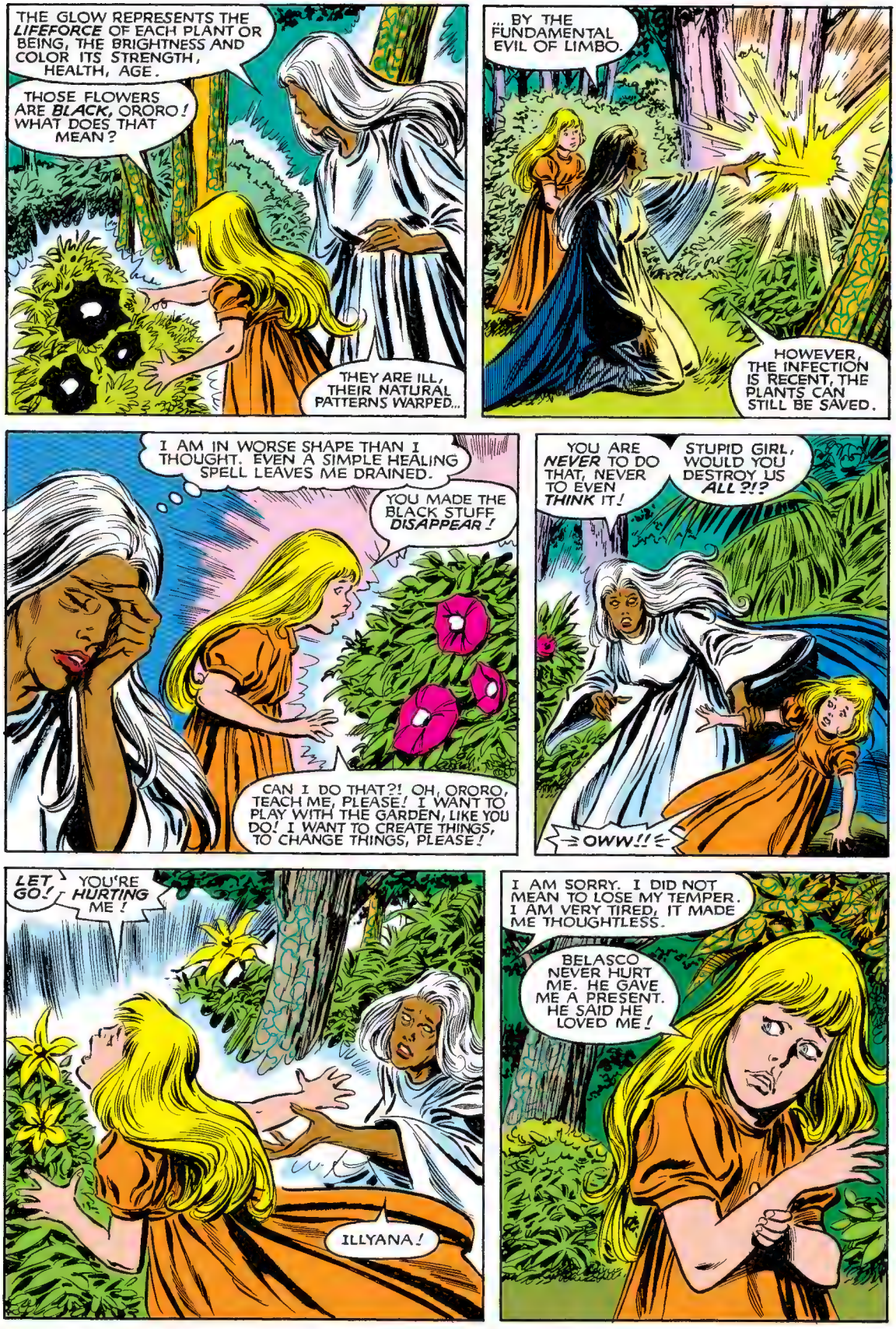

HOW FRAIL LIFE IS.
A SNAPPED SPINE, A CRUSHED NECK, A KNIFE IN THE HEART-- SO MANY WAYS TO END IT, AND SO EASILY. I CAN HURT YOU, ORORO, I CAN KILL YOU.
BUT I'D RATHER NOT.
WE'RE KINDRED SPIRITS, YOU AND I, TOUCHED BY BELASCO'S DARKLING MAJESTY. WHY HIDE YOUR TRUE SELF...
...WHEN IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL?
MONSTER, I DENY YOU AS I DENIED YOUR MAKER!
I WAS BORN A MUTANT LONG BEFORE I TURNED TO MAGIC, AND THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE ARE STILL MINE TO COMMAND!
A WIND!
A TEMPEST, ILLYANA!
FUELED BY THE RAGE AND HATRED IN MY SOUL!
YOU WON'T KILL ME-- YOU WOULDN'T DARE-- FOR FEAR OF WHAT IT WILL MEAN TO ILLYANA!
IF YOU BELIEVE THAT...
...YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN.

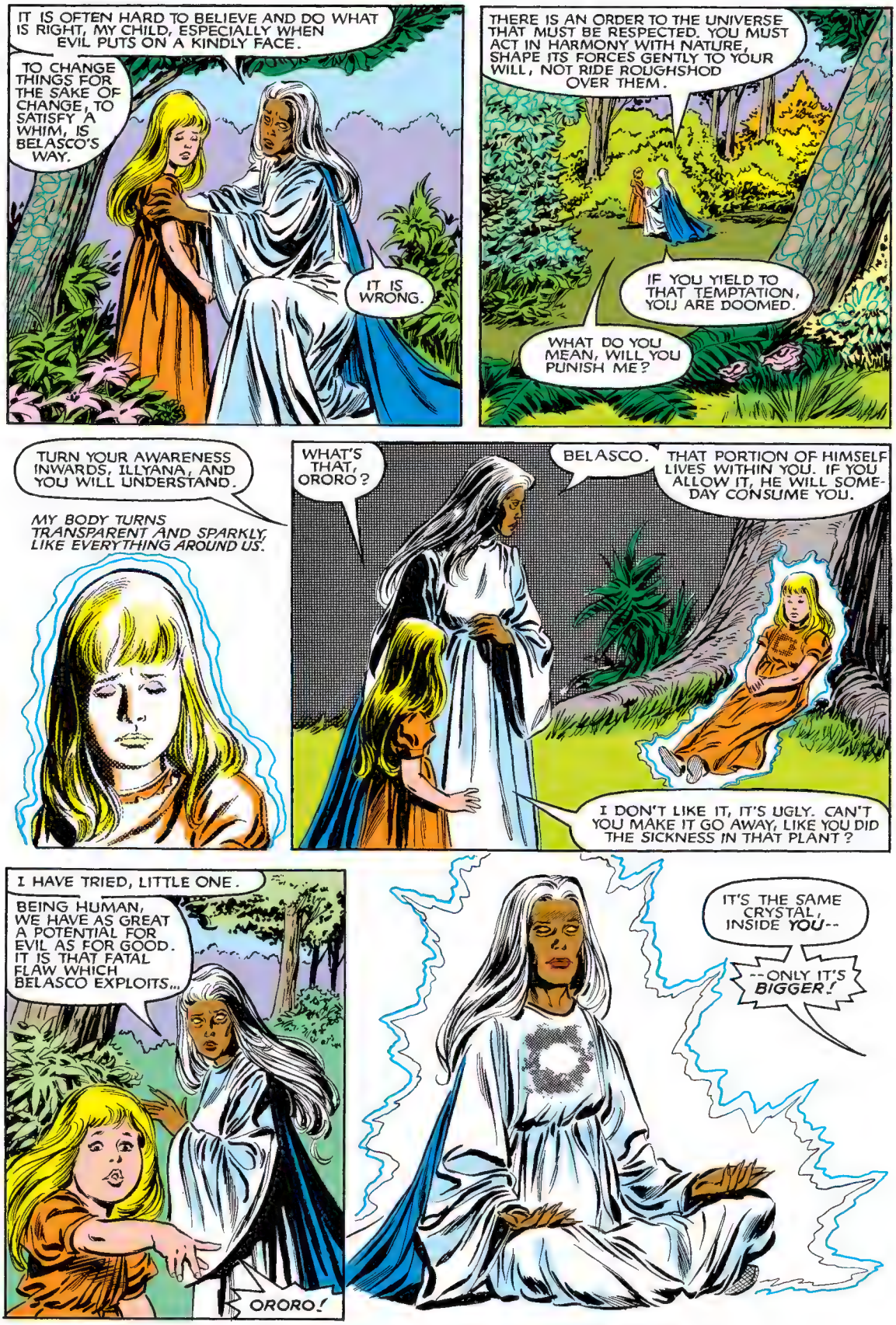

NO LUCK, huh?
QUITE THE CONTRARY, MORE THAN I DESERVE.
A PITY THE WEATHER DOES NOT OBEY IN REALITY AS IT DOES IN MY IMAGINATION. MY WILL IS AS FIRM AS EVER, BUT MY BODY CAN NO LONGER STAND THE PHYSICAL STRESS OF MANIPULATING SUCH ENERGIES.
I COULD NOT BREAK THE LINK. I BARELY SAVED MYSELF.
I TOLD YOU SO.
I FEEL UNCLEAN INSIDE.
I NEED A SWIM, CARE TO JOIN ME?
CATS DON'T LIKE WATER. WHAT NEXT?
BELASCO IS IMPRISONED HERE IN LIMBO. IF I RETURN ILLYANA TO EARTH-- ASSUMING THAT IS EVEN POSSIBLE-- HE WILL USE HER AS THE MEANS OF HIS ESCAPE. I CANNOT ELIMINATE THE MAGICKAL CANCER THAT CONSUMES HER...
...BUT I MAY BE ABLE TO TEACH HER TO COMBAT IT.
SUPPOSE I MAKE HER MY APPRENTICE?
YOU'RE INSANE!
THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT BELASCO WANTS. THE MORE SHE LEARNS...
...THE MORE VALUABLE SHE'LL BECOME, THE EASIER TO CORRUPT. YOU'LL BE DOING BELASCO'S WORK FOR HIM!
WHAT ALTERNATIVE HAVE I?!
THIS!

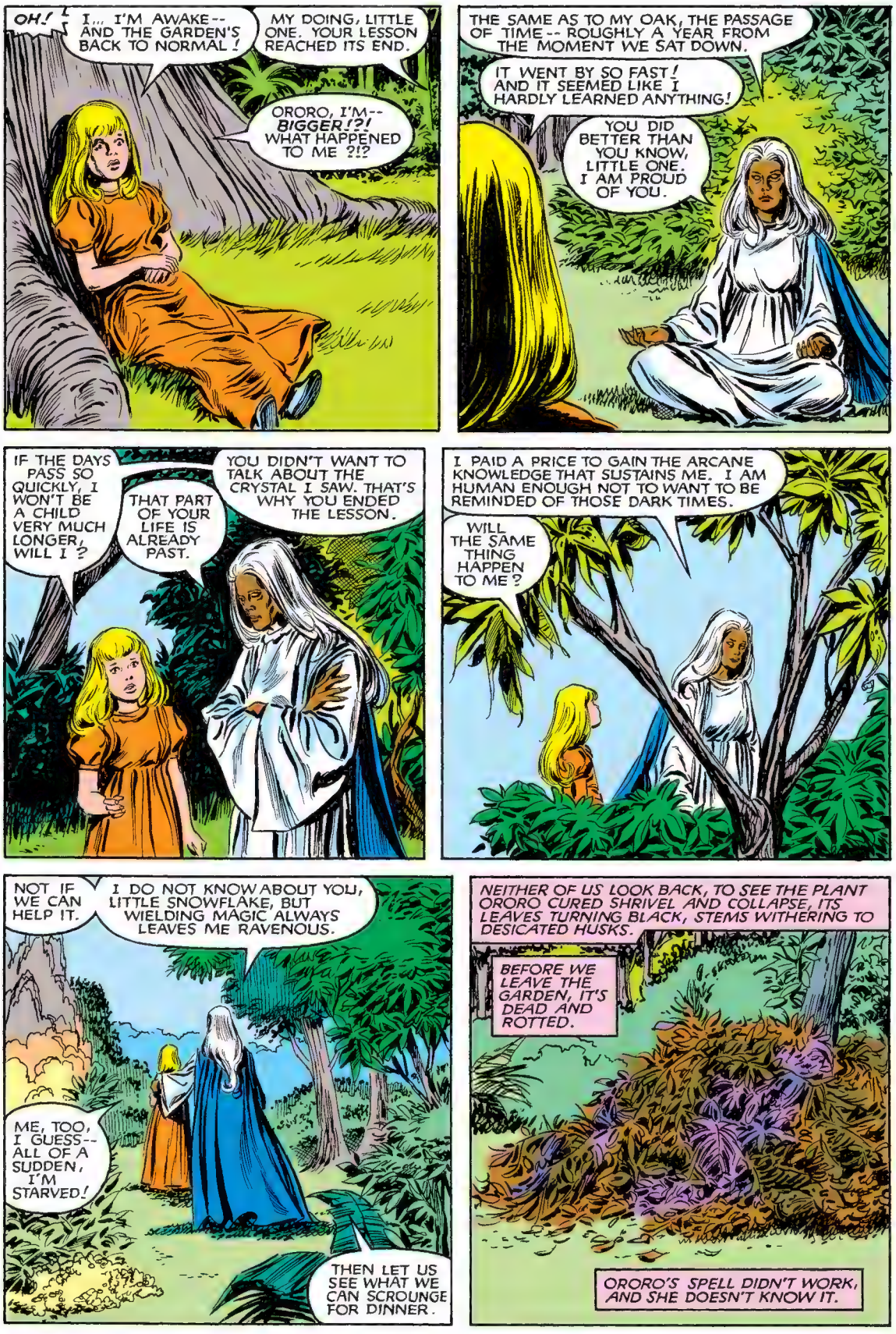

AND ONCE THE DEED IS DONE, WHAT DIFFERENCE THEN REMAINS BETWEEN US AND BELASCO?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'RE SO FAR APART NOW?
WHEN YOUR MUTANT POWERS STARTED TO WANE, YOU TURNED TO SORCERY. YOU FOLLOWED THE SAME PATH BELASCO DID--YOU BECAME HIS APPRENTICE--WHY SHOULDN'T YOU END UP AS EVIL AS HIM?!
IF HE DISAPPEARED TOMORROW, YOU'D BE ONLY TO HAPPY TO TAKE HIS PLACE!
KITTEN, HOW COULD YOU BELIEVE THAT OF ME?!
I'M NOT YOUR "KITTEN" ANYMORE, ORORO!
THANKS TO BELASCO, I'M NOT EVEN HUMAN!
I'M CAT!!
IN LOOKS AS WELL AS NAME!
AND BEFORE I ALLOW ANOTHER LIVING SOUL--ESPECIALLY ONE I CARE FOR--TO SUFFER SUCH A FATE...
...I'LL SEE ILLYANA DEAD...
...AND YOU IN HELL!


WHEN I WAKE, ORORO TAKES ME FOR A STROLL 'ROUND HER GARDEN. IT REMINDS ME OF HER ATTIC, AT PROFESSOR XAVIER'S MANSION, FULL TO BURSTING WITH GROWING THINGS.
I TELL HER ABOUT MY BAD DREAM-- SHE WAS IN IT-- BUT SHE ALREADY KNOWS.
IT WAS NOT A DREAM, BUT ANOTHER KIND OF REALITY.
I WAS GROWN UP, AND NASTY.
THAT WASN'T REALLY ME, WAS IT?
SHE DOESN'T ANSWER, AND I SHIVER-- COLD, EVEN THOUGH THE AIR IS WARM.
WHERE'S CAT?
GONE.
WHY?
THERE IS KNOWLEDGE I MUST TEACH YOU...
...THAT SHE BELIEVES ARE WRONG.
IS IT?
FOR SOME, WHEN MY BAND OF X-MEN FOUGHT BELASCO, HE DID TERRIBLE THINGS TO HER. OUR WISH IS TO SPARE YOU A SIMILAR FATE.
I DON'T KNOW WHO'S RIGHT, OR WHAT TO DO--!
ORORO, I'VE NEVER SEEN SO HUGE A TREE!
IT WAS THE FIRST THING I CREATED WHEN I BUILT MY SANCTUARY--
--MY OASIS OF LIFE AMIDST THE DESOLATION OF LIMBO-- AN ACORN, TO NURTURE AND GROW.
DID YOUR SPELL MAKE IT A GIANT?!
THE MAGIC WAS IN THE ACT OF CREATION.
AFTER THAT, I LET NATURE TAKE HER COURSE.
IT MUST BE VERY OLD.
I SUPPOSE SO.
IF I LEARN MAGIC, COULD I MAKE A TREE?
IF THAT IS WHAT YOU WISH.

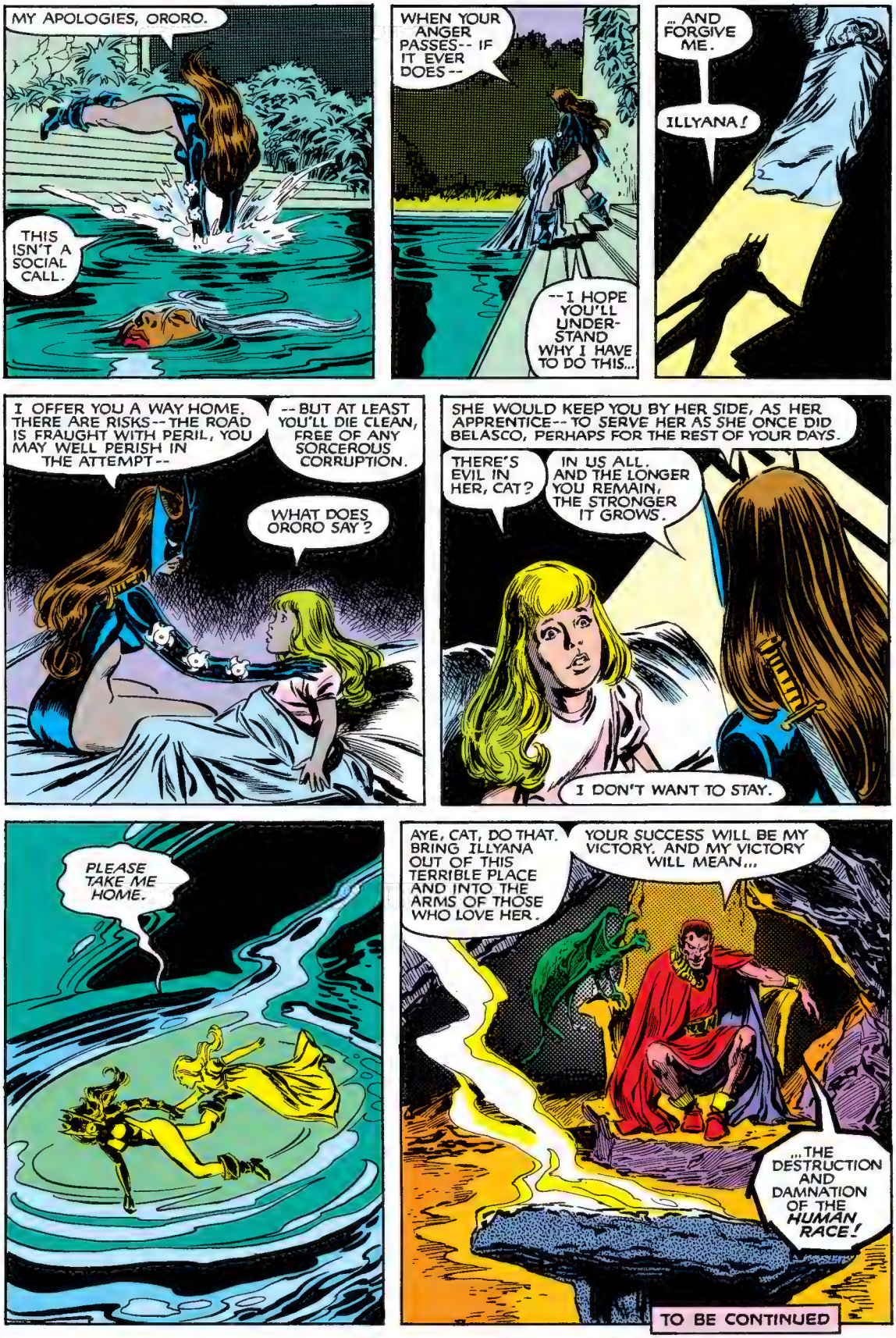

SIT BACK AGAINST THE TRUNK, CLOSE YOUR EYES, BREATHE DEEPLY, EVENLY-- RELAX.
FEEL THE BEAT OF YOUR HEART, THE BLOOD COURSING THROUGH YOUR BODY--
-- HEAR THE BIRDSONG, SMELL THE SCENT OF THE FLOWERS.
AT FIRST, I'M IN THE DARK.
THEN, I SEE A LIGHT-- ORORO'S EYES, GLOWING LIKE STARS.
HER BODY TURNS TO SILVER FIRE AND FOR AN INSTANT, AS THE FLAMES REACH OUT TO ME, I WANT TO RUN.
ORORO'S SMILE MAKES ME FEEL BETTER, BUT I CAN'T HELP FLINCHING AS THE FIRE SWEEPS UP MY ARM.
LOOK ABOUT YOU, CHILD.
MY EYES ARE STILL SHUT BUT I CAN SEE PERFECTLY! THE FIRE'S EVERYWHERE, THE GARDEN ALIVE WITH GLITTERING LIGHTS AND COLORS. IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL, I WANT TO CRY.
AND WHEN I DO, MY TEARS ARE DIAMONDS!
I FEEL A TUG AND FIND MYSELF SPLITTING APART, MY GHOST BODY LEAVING THE REAL ONE BEHIND.
THIS IS FUN, I WANT TO DO IT ALL THE TIME.
THESE ARE OUR ASTRAL FORMS, ILLYANA. UTILIZING THEM, WE CAN GO PLACES AND DO AND PERCEIVE THINGS THAT OUR HUMAN SELVES ARE UNABLE TO DO.
BUT EVEN THE GREATEST OF SPELLS PALES IN COMPARISON...
...TO THE MIRACLE OF LIFE ITSELF.


THE GLOW REPRESENTS THE *LIFEFORCE* OF EACH PLANT OR BEING, THE BRIGHTNESS AND COLOR ITS STRENGTH, HEALTH, AGE.
THOSE FLOWERS ARE *BLACK*, ORORO! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
THEY ARE ILL, THEIR NATURAL PATTERNS WARPED...
... BY THE FUNDAMENTAL EVIL OF LIMBO.
HOWEVER, THE INFECTION IS RECENT, THE PLANTS CAN STILL BE SAVED.
I AM IN WORSE SHAPE THAN I THOUGHT. EVEN A SIMPLE HEALING SPELL LEAVES ME DRAINED.
YOU MADE THE BLACK STUFF *DISAPPEAR!*
CAN I DO THAT?! OH, ORORO, TEACH ME, PLEASE! I WANT TO PLAY WITH THE GARDEN, LIKE YOU DO! I WANT TO CREATE THINGS, TO CHANGE THINGS, PLEASE!
YOU ARE *NEVER* TO DO THAT, NEVER TO EVEN *THINK* IT!
STUPID GIRL, WOULD YOU DESTROY US *ALL?!?*
OWW!!
LET GO! YOU'RE *HURTING* ME!
ILLYANA!
I AM SORRY. I DID NOT MEAN TO LOSE MY TEMPER. I AM VERY TIRED, IT MADE ME THOUGHTLESS.
BELASCO NEVER HURT ME. HE GAVE ME A PRESENT. HE SAID HE LOVED ME!


IT IS OFTEN HARD TO BELIEVE AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT, MY CHILD, ESPECIALLY WHEN EVIL PUTS ON A KINDLY FACE.
TO CHANGE THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE, TO SATISFY A WHIM, IS BELASCO'S WAY.
IT IS WRONG.
THERE IS AN ORDER TO THE UNIVERSE THAT MUST BE RESPECTED. YOU MUST ACT IN HARMONY WITH NATURE, SHAPE ITS FORCES GENTLY TO YOUR WILL, NOT RIDE ROUGHSHOD OVER THEM.
IF YOU YIELD TO THAT TEMPTATION, YOU ARE DOOMED.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WILL YOU PUNISH ME?
TURN YOUR AWARENESS INWARDS, ILLYANA, AND YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.
MY BODY TURNS TRANSPARENT AND SPARKLY, LIKE EVERYTHING AROUND US.
WHAT'S THAT, ORORO?
BELASCO.
THAT PORTION OF HIMSELF LIVES WITHIN YOU. IF YOU ALLOW IT, HE WILL SOMEDAY CONSUME YOU.
I DON'T LIKE IT, IT'S UGLY. CAN'T YOU MAKE IT GO AWAY, LIKE YOU DID THE SICKNESS IN THAT PLANT?
I HAVE TRIED, LITTLE ONE.
BEING HUMAN, WE HAVE AS GREAT A POTENTIAL FOR EVIL AS FOR GOOD. IT IS THAT FATAL FLAW WHICH BELASCO EXPLOITS...
ORORO!
IT'S THE SAME CRYSTAL, INSIDE YOU--
--ONLY IT'S BIGGER!


OH!
I... I'M AWAKE-- AND THE GARDEN'S BACK TO NORMAL!
MY DOING, LITTLE ONE. YOUR LESSON REACHED ITS END.
ORORO, I'M-- BIGGER!?! WHAT HAPPENED TO ME ?!?
THE SAME AS TO MY OAK, THE PASSAGE OF TIME-- ROUGHLY A YEAR FROM THE MOMENT WE SAT DOWN.
IT WENT BY SO FAST! AND IT SEEMED LIKE I HARDLY LEARNED ANYTHING!
YOU DID BETTER THAN YOU KNOW, LITTLE ONE. I AM PROUD OF YOU.
IF THE DAYS PASS SO QUICKLY, I WON'T BE A CHILD VERY MUCH LONGER, WILL I ?
THAT PART OF YOUR LIFE IS ALREADY PAST.
YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE CRYSTAL I SAW. THAT'S WHY YOU ENDED THE LESSON.
I PAID A PRICE TO GAIN THE ARCANE KNOWLEDGE THAT SUSTAINS ME. I AM HUMAN ENOUGH NOT TO WANT TO BE REMINDED OF THOSE DARK TIMES.
WILL THE SAME THING HAPPEN TO ME ?
NOT IF WE CAN HELP IT.
I DO NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE, BUT WIELDING MAGIC ALWAYS LEAVES ME RAVENOUS.
ME, TOO, I GUESS-- ALL OF A SUDDEN, I'M STARVED!
THEN LET US SEE WHAT WE CAN SCROUNGE FOR DINNER.
NEITHER OF US LOOK BACK, TO SEE THE PLANT ORORO CURED SHRIVEL AND COLLAPSE, ITS LEAVES TURNING BLACK, STEMS WITHERING TO DESICATED HUSKS.
BEFORE WE LEAVE THE GARDEN, IT'S DEAD AND ROTTED.
ORORO'S SPELL DIDN'T WORK, AND SHE DOESN'T KNOW IT.

THAT NIGHT, I DREAM OF HOME-- AND WHIMPER, TO DISCOVER BELASCO'S FACE FAR MORE REAL IN MY MIND'S-EYE THAN MY BROTHER PIOTR'S.
I'VE BEEN AWAY SO LONG.
SUPPOSE I FORGOT EVERY-THING ABOUT MY LIFE ON EARTH? WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME, THEN?!
AN INTRUDER, IN MY GARDEN!
NOT A DEMON, NO SERVANT OF BELASCO. ITS AURA IS ONLY PARTLY TAINTED...
... AND AS FAMILIAR TO ME AS MY OWN.
CAT?
WHERE ARE YOU, MY FRIEND? WHY DO YOU HIDE?
SHOW YOURSELF-- AARRRGKGH!
SPLASH!


MY APOLOGIES, ORORO.
THIS ISN'T A SOCIAL CALL.
WHEN YOUR ANGER PASSES-- IF IT EVER DOES--
--I HOPE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHY I HAVE TO DO THIS...
...AND FORGIVE ME.
ILLYANA!
I OFFER YOU A WAY HOME. THERE ARE RISKS-- THE ROAD IS FRAUGHT WITH PERIL, YOU MAY WELL PERISH IN THE ATTEMPT--
--BUT AT LEAST YOU'LL DIE CLEAN, FREE OF ANY SORCEROUS CORRUPTION.
WHAT DOES ORORO SAY?
SHE WOULD KEEP YOU BY HER SIDE, AS HER APPRENTICE-- TO SERVE HER AS SHE ONCE DID BELASCO, PERHAPS FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS.
THERE'S EVIL IN HER, CAT?
IN US ALL. AND THE LONGER YOU REMAIN, THE STRONGER IT GROWS.
I DON'T WANT TO STAY.
PLEASE TAKE ME HOME.
AYE, CAT, DO THAT. BRING ILLYANA OUT OF THIS TERRIBLE PLACE AND INTO THE ARMS OF THOSE WHO LOVE HER.
YOUR SUCCESS WILL BE MY VICTORY. AND MY VICTORY WILL MEAN...
...THE DESTRUCTION AND DAMNATION OF THE HUMAN RACE!
TO BE CONTINUED

MARVEL
FROM THE X-MEN
STORM AND ILLYANA
MAGIK
#2 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
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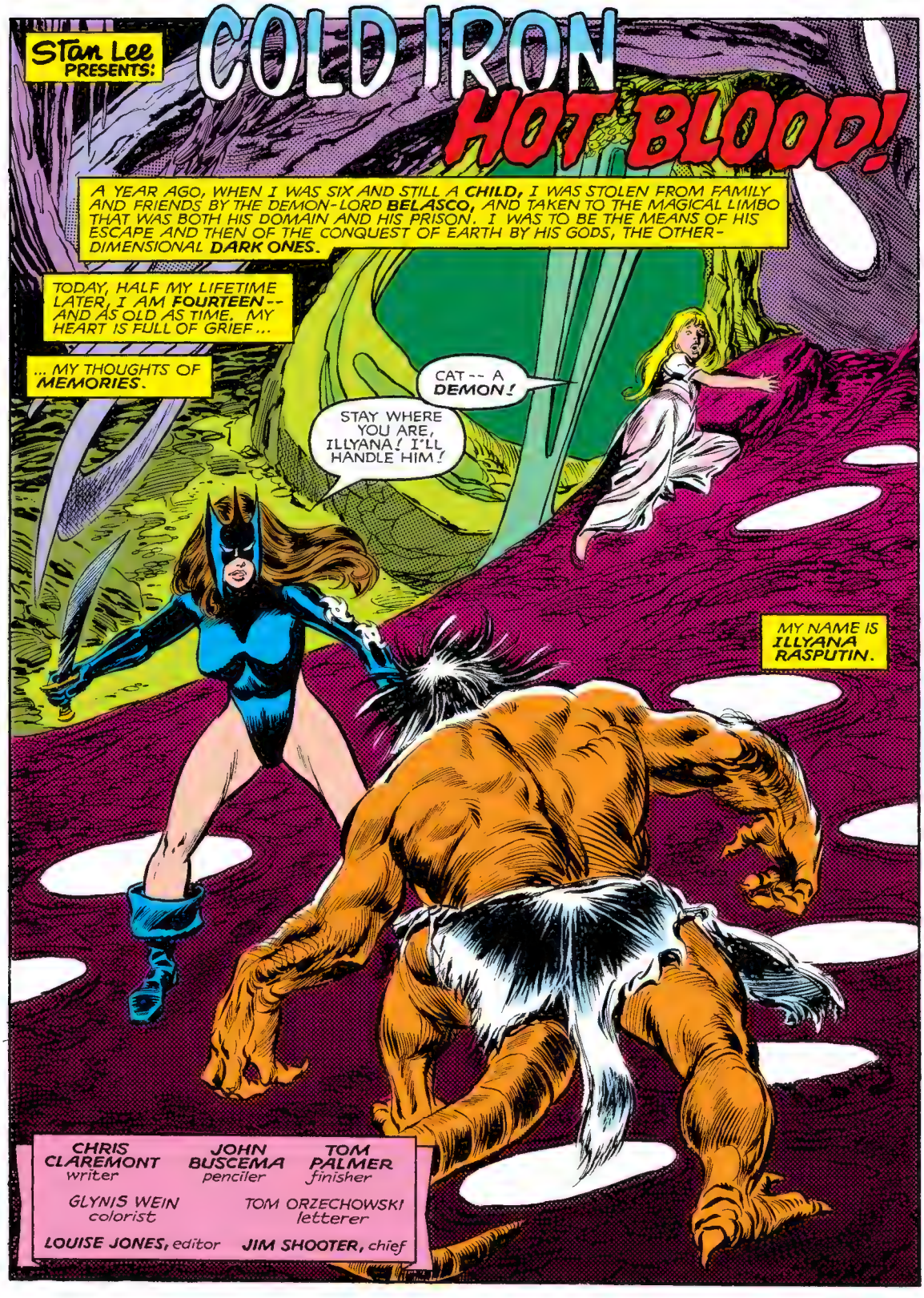
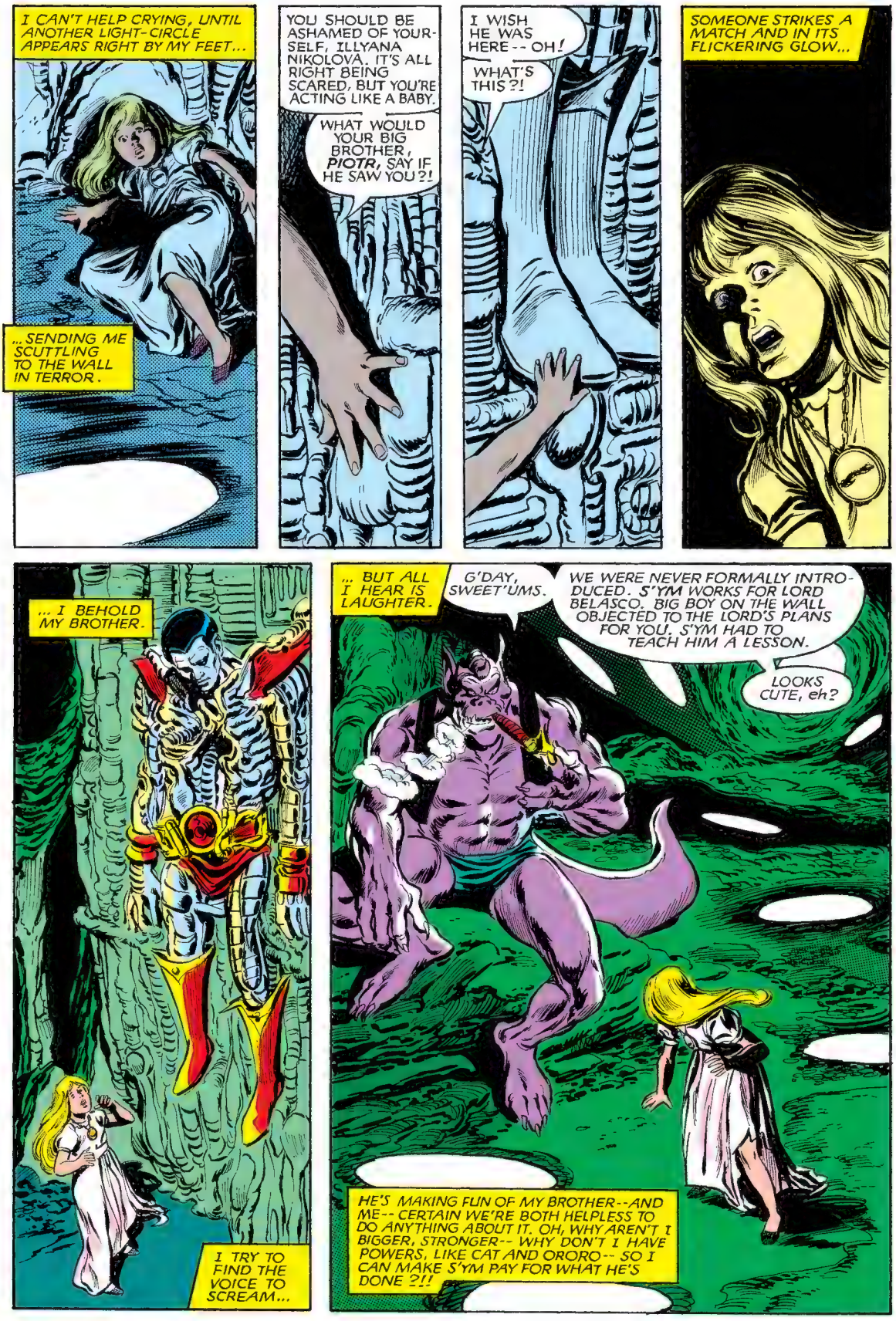
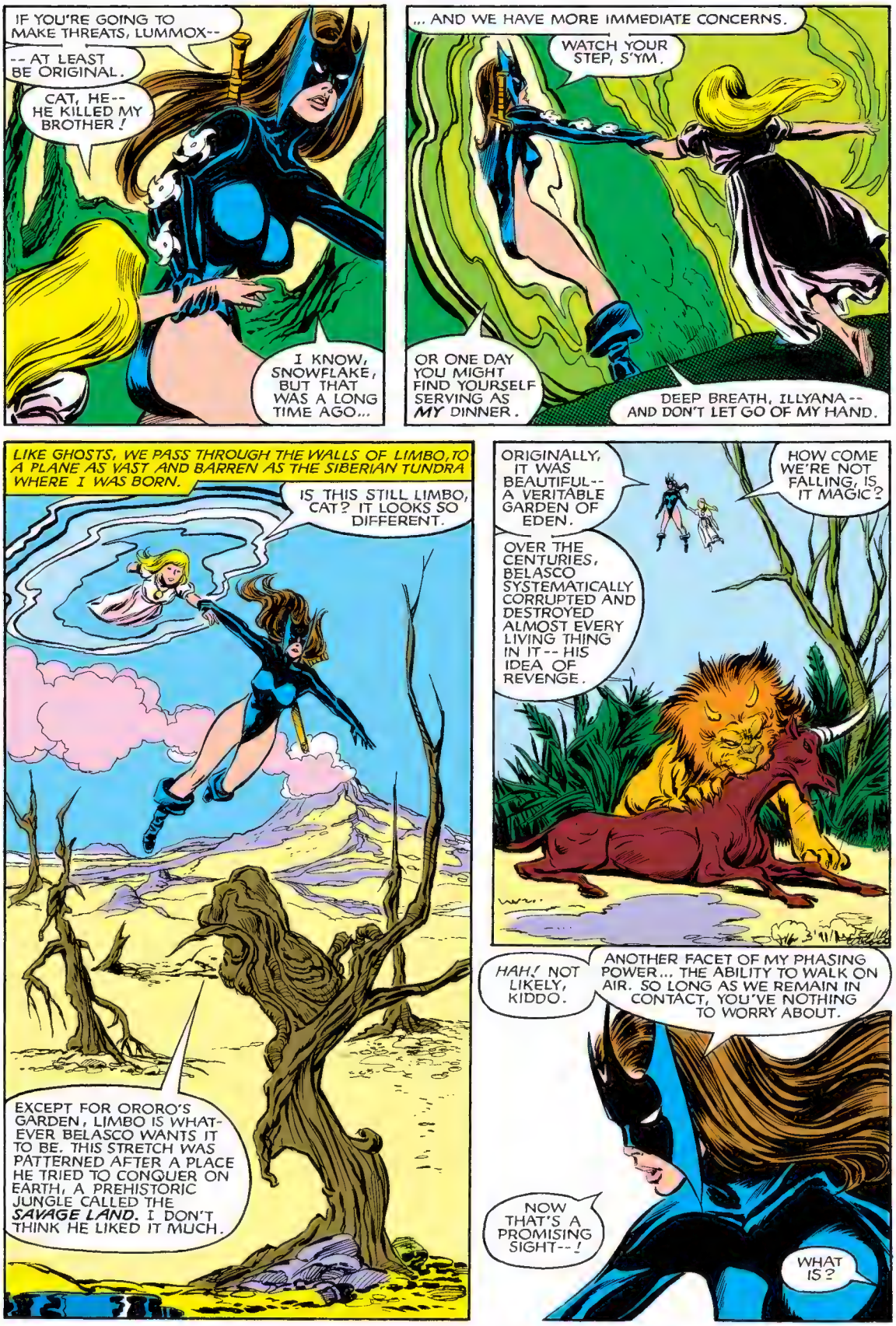

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
COLD IRON HOT BLOOD!
A YEAR AGO, WHEN I WAS SIX AND STILL A CHILD, I WAS STOLEN FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS BY THE DEMON-LORD BELASCO, AND TAKEN TO THE MAGICAL LIMBO THAT WAS BOTH HIS DOMAIN AND HIS PRISON. I WAS TO BE THE MEANS OF HIS ESCAPE AND THEN OF THE CONQUEST OF EARTH BY HIS GODS, THE OTHER-DIMENSIONAL DARK ONES.
TODAY, HALF MY LIFETIME LATER, I AM FOURTEEN -- AND AS OLD AS TIME. MY HEART IS FULL OF GRIEF...
... MY THOUGHTS OF MEMORIES.
CAT -- A DEMON!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, ILLYANA! I'LL HANDLE HIM!
MY NAME IS ILLYANA RASPUTIN.
CHRIS CLAREMONT writer
JOHN BUSCEMA penciler
TOM PALMER finisher
GLYNIS WEIN colorist
TOM ORZECHOWSKI letterer
LOUISE JONES, editor
JIM SHOOTER, chief

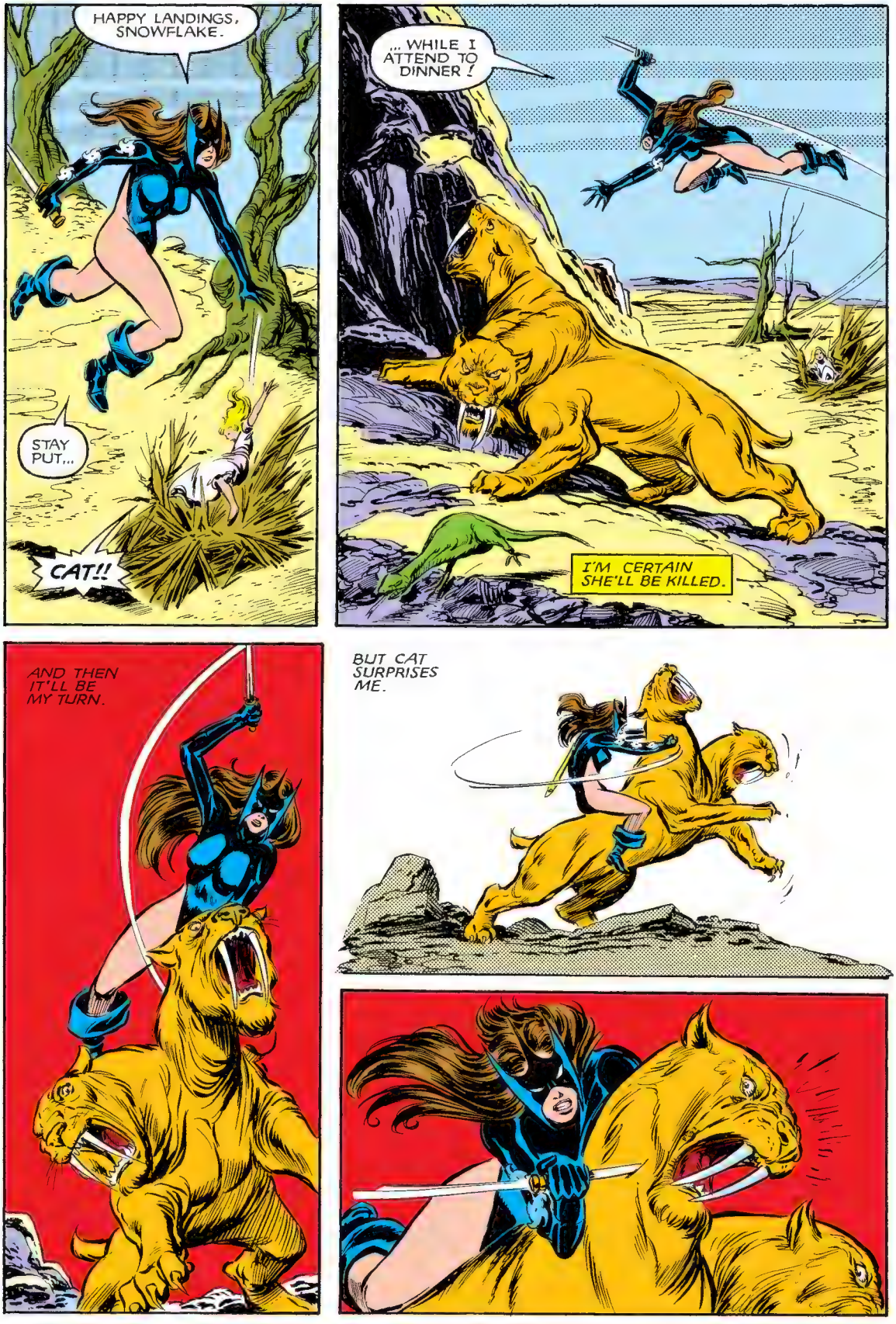
CAT SAID SHE'D SEE ME SAFELY HOME.
CAT ISN'T HER REAL NAME.
UNNNGNH!
SHE USED TO BE THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE X-MEN: KITTY PRYDE.
THE MONSTER'S BLOW CATCHES HER OFF-GUARD.
OTHERWISE, CAT WOULD HAVE USED HER MUTANT PHASING POWER...
... AND ITS FIST WOULD HAVE PASSED HARMLESSLY THROUGH HER.
I HAVEN'T ANY POWERS OR FIGHTING SKILLS.
I'M JUST A GIRL.
THE DEMON'S PREY.
ILLYANA--STOP!
STAND YOUR GROUND! DON'T MAKE A MOVE!
AND WHATEVER HAPPENS--
--STAY CLEAR OF THOSE CIRCLES OF LIGHT!
HER STARS ARE SHARP AS RAZORS, BUT ALL THEY DO IS ATTRACT THE MONSTER'S ATTENTION...

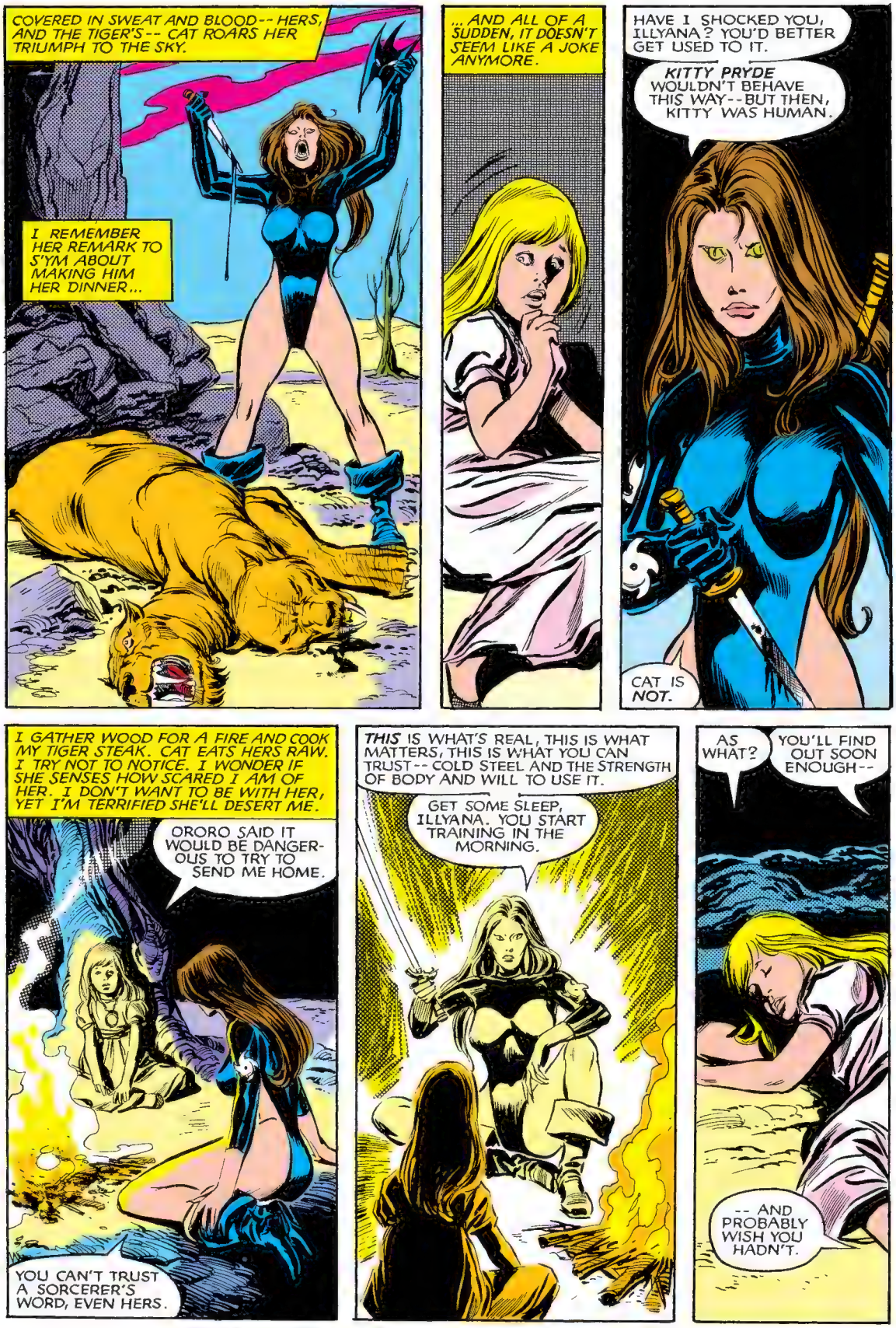
... AND MAKE IT VERY ANGRY.
SHE'S READY FOR THE ATTACK.
YOU DID IT, CAT, YOU KILLED THE DEMON! ARE WE SAFE NOW?!
BEHIND YOU, GIRL!
HUH?!?
OH, NO!
CAT, HELP ME!
SAVE ME!
MINDLESS AS ANY ANIMAL...
...I THROW MYSELF AWAY FROM THIS NEW HORROR, REALIZING TOO LATE...
... WHERE I'M GOING TO LAND.
THE GLARE BLINDS ME.
WHEN MY EYES CLEAR, IT'S SO DARK I CAN HARDLY SEE WHERE I AM-- BUT I KNOW, IT'S SOMEWHERE ELSE, FAR FROM CAT.
I'M ALONE.
LOST.

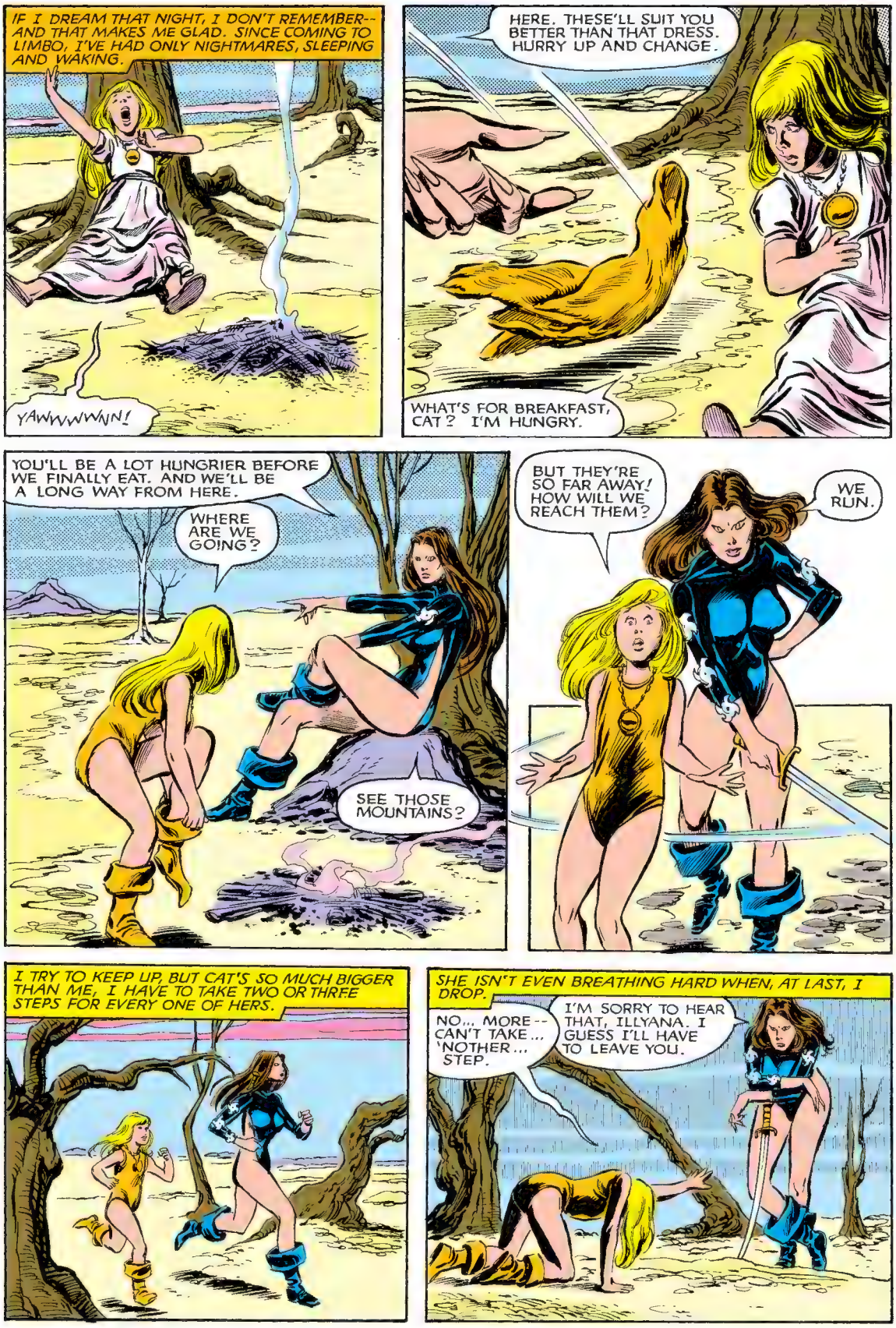

I CAN'T HELP CRYING, UNTIL ANOTHER LIGHT-CIRCLE APPEARS RIGHT BY MY FEET...
...SENDING ME SCUTTLING TO THE WALL IN TERROR.
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF, ILLYANA NIKOLOVA. IT'S ALL RIGHT BEING SCARED, BUT YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A BABY.
WHAT WOULD YOUR BIG BROTHER, PIOTR, SAY IF HE SAW YOU?!
I WISH HE WAS HERE -- OH!
WHAT'S THIS?!
SOMEONE STRIKES A MATCH AND IN ITS FLICKERING GLOW...
... I BEHOLD MY BROTHER.
I TRY TO FIND THE VOICE TO SCREAM...
... BUT ALL I HEAR IS LAUGHTER.
G'DAY, SWEET'UMS.
WE WERE NEVER FORMALLY INTRODUCED. S'YM WORKS FOR LORD BELASCO. BIG BOY ON THE WALL OBJECTED TO THE LORD'S PLANS FOR YOU. S'YM HAD TO TEACH HIM A LESSON.
LOOKS CUTE, eh?
HE'S MAKING FUN OF MY BROTHER--AND ME-- CERTAIN WE'RE BOTH HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. OH, WHY AREN'T I BIGGER, STRONGER-- WHY DON'T I HAVE POWERS, LIKE CAT AND ORORO-- SO I CAN MAKE S'YM PAY FOR WHAT HE'S DONE ?!!

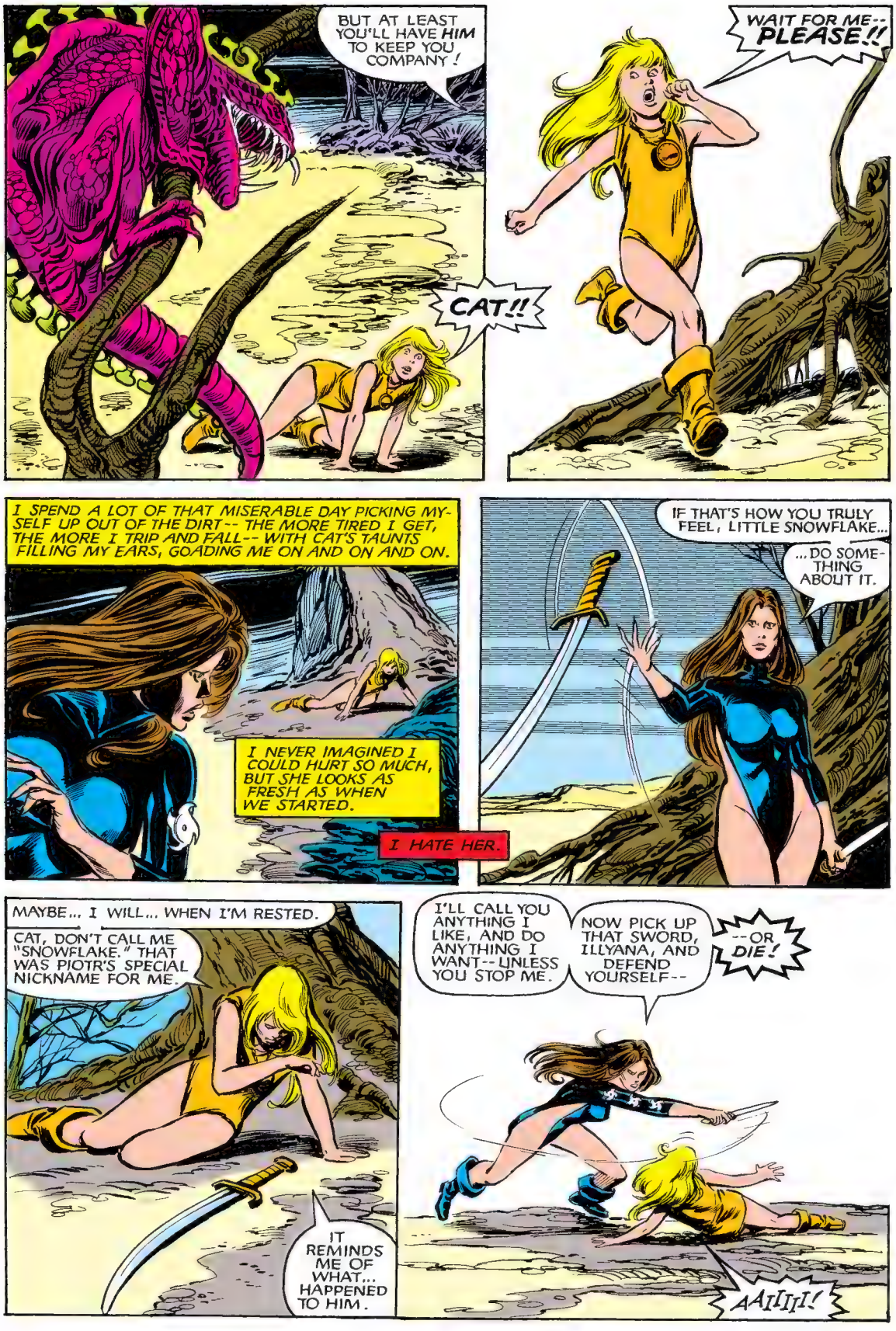
I SEE A LIGHT-CIRCLE...
... AND BOLT FOR IT!
S'YM WAITS 'TIL I'M A STEP FROM MY GOAL...
...BEFORE...
NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY, CUTIE-HONEY.
OWW!!
LET ME GO! PUT ME DOWN!
S'YM ADVISES SILENCE.
OR S'YM MAY DELIVER YOU TO BELASCO A PIECE AT A TIME. HE NEEDS YOU ALIVE, NOT NECESSARILY WHOLE.
OF COURSE, HE CAN ALWAYS STITCH YOU BACK TOGETHER AGAIN-- BUT THAT'LL HURT...
...AND THE END RESULT WON'T BE PRETTY... ARRRGH!
HI, THERE.
REMEMBER ME ?
I GUESS NOT-- ELSE YOU'D KNOW BETTER THAN TO TRY TO GRAB ME.
YOU'VE ANNOYED S'YM ONCE TOO OFTEN, KITTY-CAT. S'YM INTENDS TO FEAST ON YOUR HEART AS HE DID YOUR PAL WOLVERINE'S.

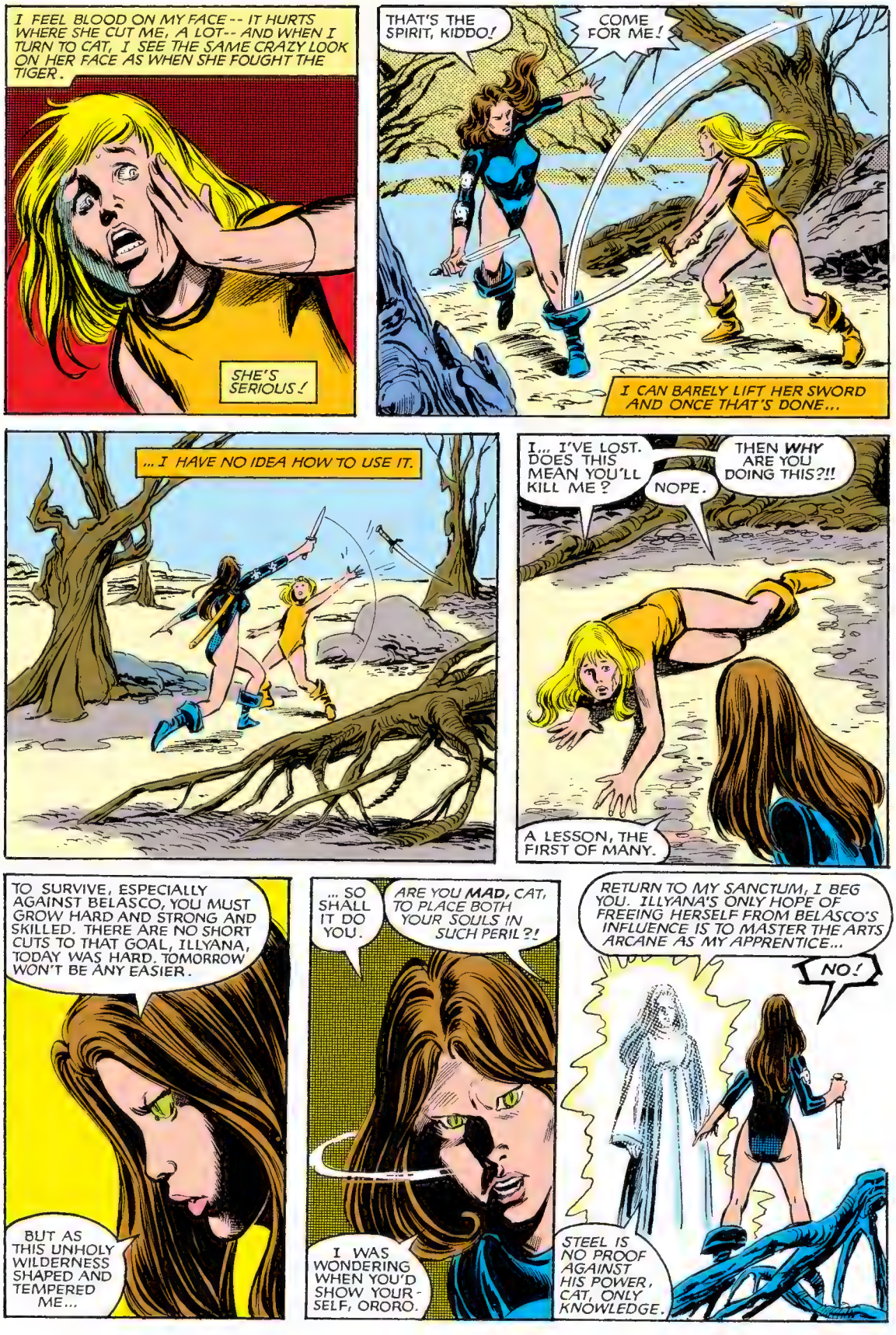

IF YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THREATS, LUMMOX--
-- AT LEAST BE ORIGINAL.
CAT, HE-- HE KILLED MY BROTHER!
I KNOW, SNOWFLAKE, BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO...
... AND WE HAVE MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS.
WATCH YOUR STEP, S'YM.
OR ONE DAY YOU MIGHT FIND YOURSELF SERVING AS MY DINNER.
DEEP BREATH, ILLYANA-- AND DON'T LET GO OF MY HAND.
LIKE GHOSTS, WE PASS THROUGH THE WALLS OF LIMBO, TO A PLANE AS VAST AND BARREN AS THE SIBERIAN TUNDRA WHERE I WAS BORN.
IS THIS STILL LIMBO, CAT? IT LOOKS SO DIFFERENT.
EXCEPT FOR ORORO'S GARDEN, LIMBO IS WHATEVER BELASCO WANTS IT TO BE. THIS STRETCH WAS PATTERNED AFTER A PLACE HE TRIED TO CONQUER ON EARTH, A PREHISTORIC JUNGLE CALLED THE SAVAGE LAND. I DON'T THINK HE LIKED IT MUCH.
ORIGINALLY, IT WAS BEAUTIFUL-- A VERITABLE GARDEN OF EDEN.
HOW COME WE'RE NOT FALLING, IS IT MAGIC?
OVER THE CENTURIES, BELASCO SYSTEMATICALLY CORRUPTED AND DESTROYED ALMOST EVERY LIVING THING IN IT -- HIS IDEA OF REVENGE.
HAH! NOT LIKELY, KIDDO.
ANOTHER FACET OF MY PHASING POWER... THE ABILITY TO WALK ON AIR. SO LONG AS WE REMAIN IN CONTACT, YOU'VE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
NOW THAT'S A PROMISING SIGHT--!
WHAT IS?

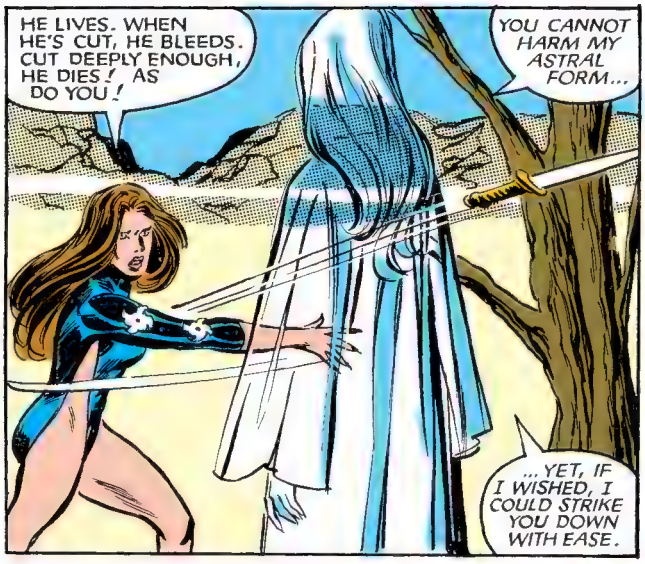

HAPPY LANDINGS, SNOWFLAKE.
STAY PUT...
CAT!!
... WHILE I ATTEND TO DINNER!
I'M CERTAIN SHE'LL BE KILLED.
AND THEN IT'LL BE MY TURN.
BUT CAT SURPRISES ME.


COVERED IN SWEAT AND BLOOD-- HERS, AND THE TIGER'S-- CAT ROARS HER TRIUMPH TO THE SKY.
I REMEMBER HER REMARK TO S'YM ABOUT MAKING HIM HER DINNER...
... AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A JOKE ANYMORE.
HAVE I SHOCKED YOU, ILLYANA? YOU'D BETTER GET USED TO IT.
KITTY PRYDE WOULDN'T BEHAVE THIS WAY--BUT THEN, KITTY WAS HUMAN.
CAT IS NOT.
I GATHER WOOD FOR A FIRE AND COOK MY TIGER STEAK. CAT EATS HERS RAW. I TRY NOT TO NOTICE. I WONDER IF SHE SENSES HOW SCARED I AM OF HER. I DON'T WANT TO BE WITH HER, YET I'M TERRIFIED SHE'LL DESERT ME.
ORORO SAID IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO TRY TO SEND ME HOME.
YOU CAN'T TRUST A SORCERER'S WORD, EVEN HERS.
THIS IS WHAT'S REAL, THIS IS WHAT MATTERS, THIS IS WHAT YOU CAN TRUST-- COLD STEEL AND THE STRENGTH OF BODY AND WILL TO USE IT.
GET SOME SLEEP, ILLYANA. YOU START TRAINING IN THE MORNING.
AS WHAT?
YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH--
-- AND PROBABLY WISH YOU HADN'T.

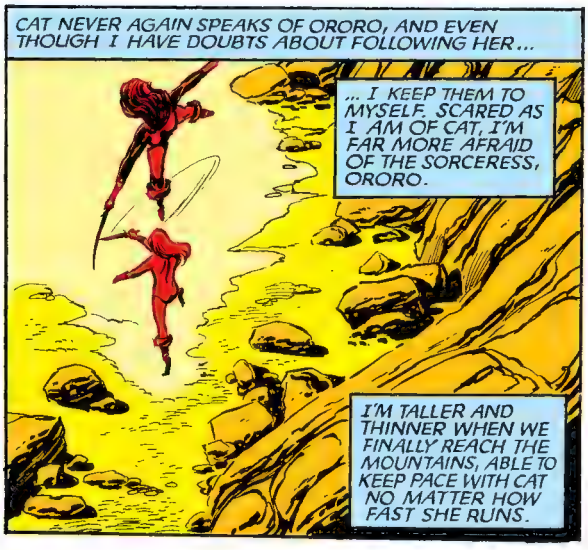

IF I DREAM THAT NIGHT, I DON'T REMEMBER-- AND THAT MAKES ME GLAD. SINCE COMING TO LIMBO, I'VE HAD ONLY NIGHTMARES, SLEEPING AND WAKING.
YAWWWWWN!
HERE. THESE'LL SUIT YOU BETTER THAN THAT DRESS. HURRY UP AND CHANGE.
WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST, CAT? I'M HUNGRY.
YOU'LL BE A LOT HUNGRIER BEFORE WE FINALLY EAT. AND WE'LL BE A LONG WAY FROM HERE.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
SEE THOSE MOUNTAINS?
BUT THEY'RE SO FAR AWAY! HOW WILL WE REACH THEM?
WE RUN.
I TRY TO KEEP UP, BUT CAT'S SO MUCH BIGGER THAN ME, I HAVE TO TAKE TWO OR THREE STEPS FOR EVERY ONE OF HERS.
SHE ISN'T EVEN BREATHING HARD WHEN, AT LAST, I DROP.
NO... MORE -- CAN'T TAKE... 'NOTHER... STEP.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, ILLYANA. I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE YOU.

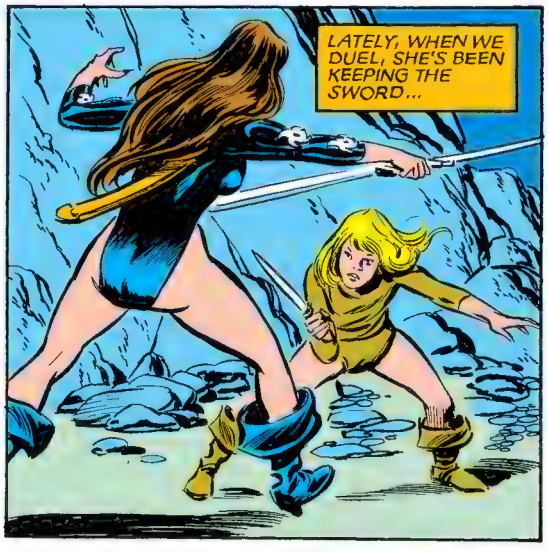

BUT AT LEAST YOU'LL HAVE HIM TO KEEP YOU COMPANY!
CAT!!
WAIT FOR ME-- PLEASE!!
I SPEND A LOT OF THAT MISERABLE DAY PICKING MYSELF UP OUT OF THE DIRT-- THE MORE TIRED I GET, THE MORE I TRIP AND FALL-- WITH CAT'S TAUNTS FILLING MY EARS, GOADING ME ON AND ON AND ON.
I NEVER IMAGINED I COULD HURT SO MUCH, BUT SHE LOOKS AS FRESH AS WHEN WE STARTED.
I HATE HER.
IF THAT'S HOW YOU TRULY FEEL, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE...
...DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
MAYBE... I WILL... WHEN I'M RESTED.
CAT, DON'T CALL ME "SNOWFLAKE." THAT WAS PIOTR'S SPECIAL NICKNAME FOR ME.
IT REMINDS ME OF WHAT... HAPPENED TO HIM.
I'LL CALL YOU ANYTHING I LIKE, AND DO ANYTHING I WANT-- UNLESS YOU STOP ME.
NOW PICK UP THAT SWORD, ILLYANA, AND DEFEND YOURSELF--
--OR DIE!
AAIIII!


I FEEL BLOOD ON MY FACE -- IT HURTS WHERE SHE CUT ME, A LOT-- AND WHEN I TURN TO CAT, I SEE THE SAME CRAZY LOOK ON HER FACE AS WHEN SHE FOUGHT THE TIGER.
SHE'S SERIOUS!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, KIDDO!
COME FOR ME!
I CAN BARELY LIFT HER SWORD AND ONCE THAT'S DONE...
... I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO USE IT.
I... I'VE LOST. DOES THIS MEAN YOU'LL KILL ME?
NOPE.
THEN WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!!
A LESSON, THE FIRST OF MANY.
TO SURVIVE, ESPECIALLY AGAINST BELASCO, YOU MUST GROW HARD AND STRONG AND SKILLED. THERE ARE NO SHORT CUTS TO THAT GOAL, ILLYANA, TODAY WAS HARD. TOMORROW WON'T BE ANY EASIER.
BUT AS THIS UNHOLY WILDERNESS SHAPED AND TEMPERED ME...
... SO SHALL IT DO YOU.
ARE YOU MAD, CAT, TO PLACE BOTH YOUR SOULS IN SUCH PERIL?!
I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D SHOW YOURSELF, ORORO.
RETURN TO MY SANCTUM, I BEG YOU. ILLYANA'S ONLY HOPE OF FREEING HERSELF FROM BELASCO'S INFLUENCE IS TO MASTER THE ARTS ARCANE AS MY APPRENTICE...
NO!
STEEL IS NO PROOF AGAINST HIS POWER, CAT, ONLY KNOWLEDGE.

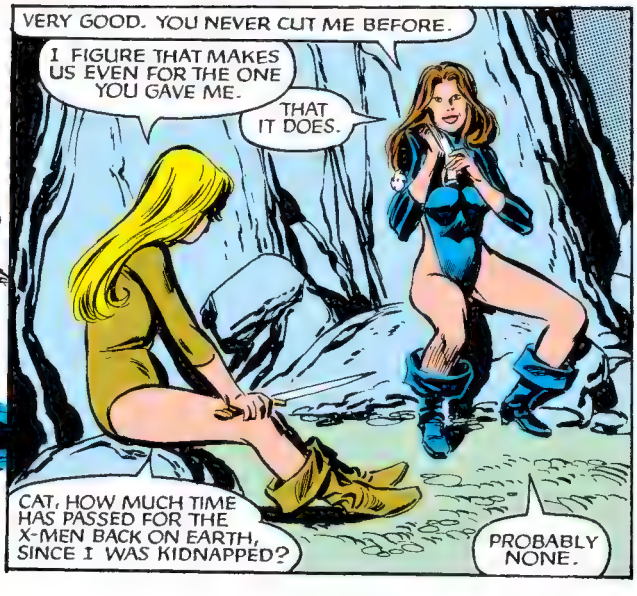

HE LIVES. WHEN HE'S CUT, HE BLEEDS. CUT DEEPLY ENOUGH, HE DIES! AS DO YOU!
YOU CANNOT HARM MY ASTRAL FORM...
... YET, IF I WISHED, I COULD STRIKE YOU DOWN WITH EASE.

BUT YOU WOULD RESIST ME UNTO DEATH AND TAKING THE LIFE OF ONE I LOVE WOULD MAKE ME NO BETTER THAN BELASCO.
YOU GIVE ME NO CHOICE BUT TO LEAVE YOU TO YOUR DESTINY.
FAREWELL, MY CAT. WE SHALL NOT MEET AGAIN.

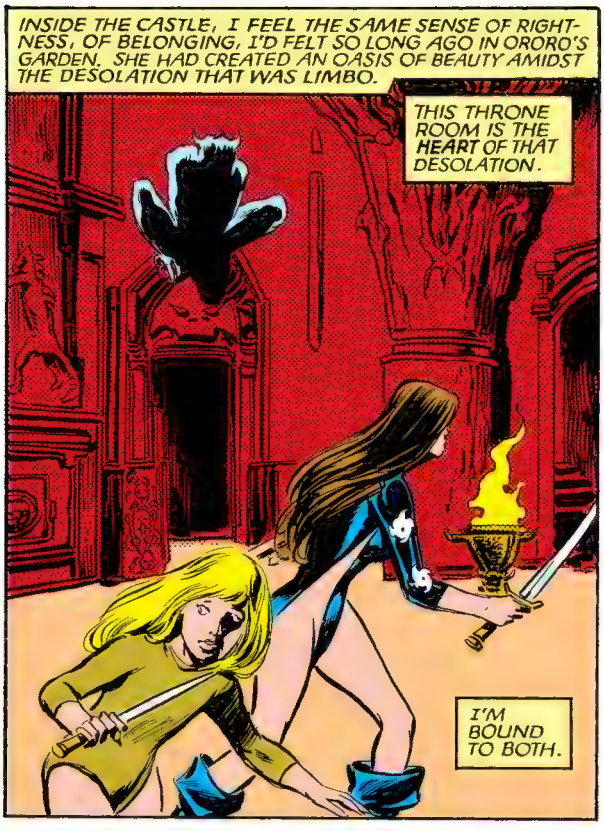

CAT NEVER AGAIN SPEAKS OF ORORO, AND EVEN THOUGH I HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT FOLLOWING HER...
... I KEEP THEM TO MYSELF. SCARED AS I AM OF CAT, I'M FAR MORE AFRAID OF THE SORCERESS, ORORO.
I'M TALLER AND THINNER WHEN WE FINALLY REACH THE MOUNTAINS, ABLE TO KEEP PACE WITH CAT NO MATTER HOW FAST SHE RUNS.

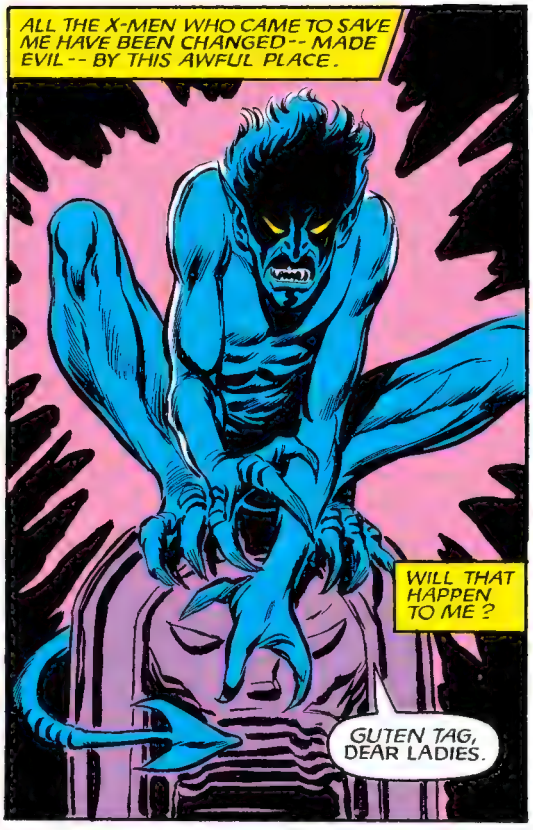

LATELY, WHEN WE DUEL, SHE'S BEEN KEEPING THE SWORD...

...AND LEAVING ME THE KNIFE.
I'VE BEGUN WINNING, TOO.

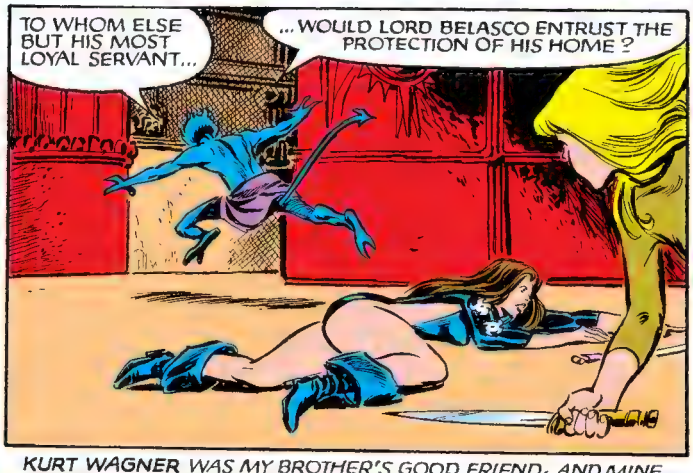

VERY GOOD. YOU NEVER CUT ME BEFORE.
I FIGURE THAT MAKES US EVEN FOR THE ONE YOU GAVE ME.
THAT IT DOES.
CAT, HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED FOR THE X-MEN BACK ON EARTH, SINCE I WAS KIDNAPPED?
PROBABLY NONE.

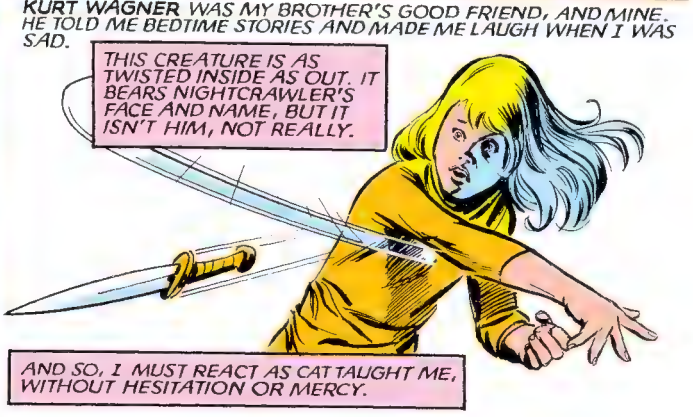
YET I'VE AGED ALMOST THREE YEARS. THEY WON'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES.
DON'T GET COCKY, KIDDO. YOU'RE NOT HOME YET. FAR FROM IT.
WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
WE CLIMB...
...TO BELASCO'S CITADEL.
D'YOU THINK ANYONE'S HERE?
I HOPE SO.
I DON'T.

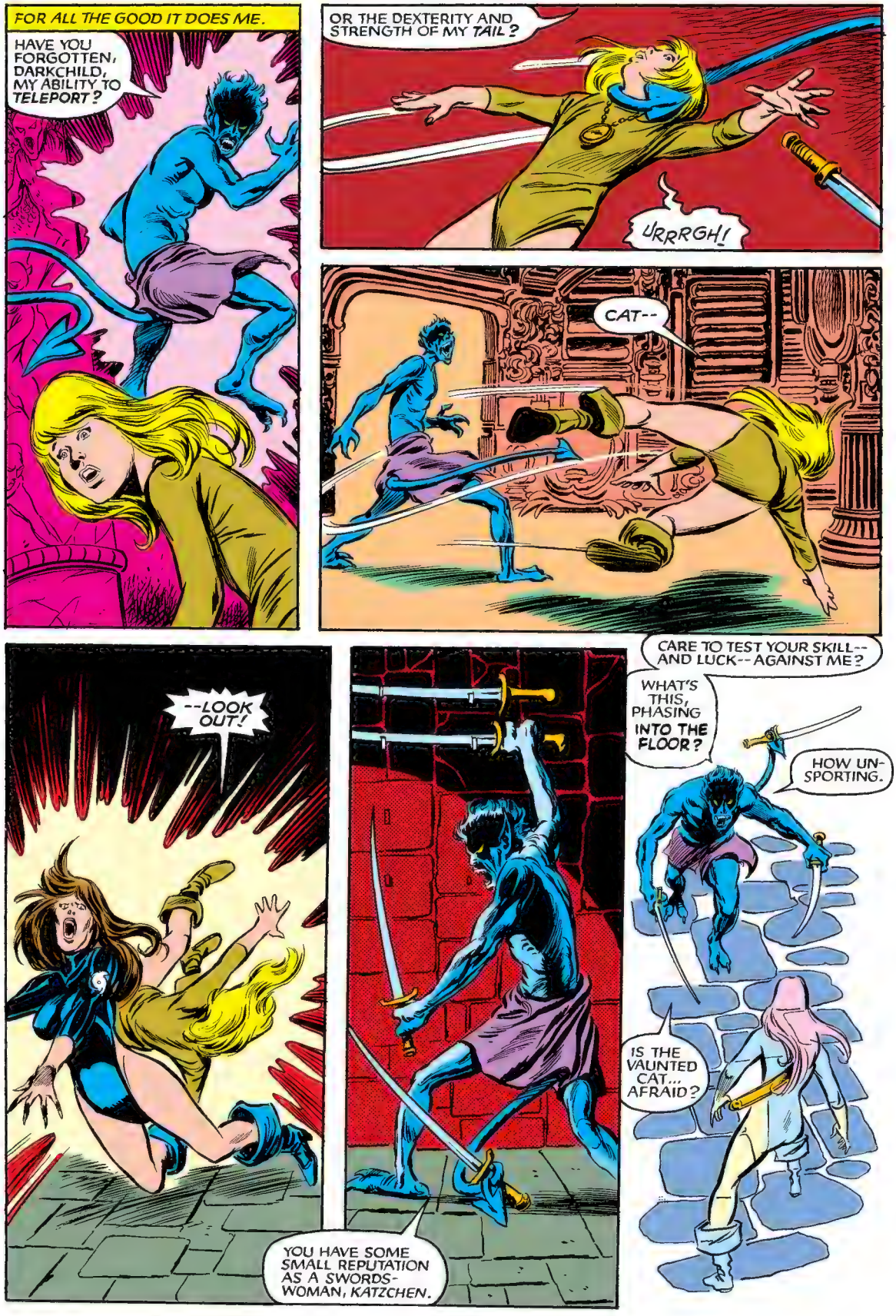

INSIDE THE CASTLE, I FEEL THE SAME SENSE OF RIGHTNESS, OF BELONGING, I'D FELT SO LONG AGO IN ORORO'S GARDEN. SHE HAD CREATED AN OASIS OF BEAUTY AMIDST THE DESOLATION THAT WAS LIMBO.
THIS THRONE ROOM IS THE HEART OF THAT DESOLATION.
I'M BOUND TO BOTH.


ALL THE X-MEN WHO CAME TO SAVE ME HAVE BEEN CHANGED -- MADE EVIL -- BY THIS AWFUL PLACE.
WILL THAT HAPPEN TO ME?
GUTEN TAG, DEAR LADIES.

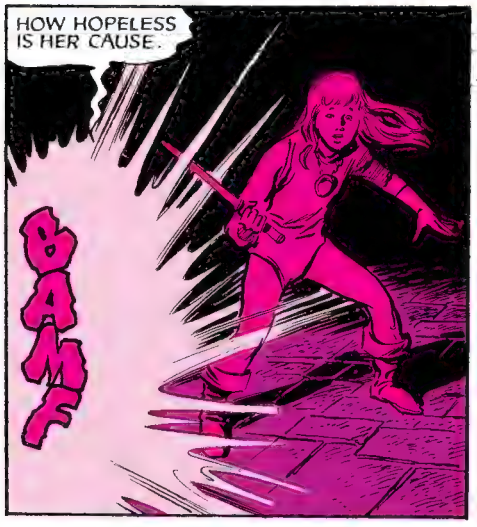
HOW KIND OF YOU TO PAY US A VISIT.
NIGHT-CRAWLER!


TO WHOM ELSE BUT HIS MOST LOYAL SERVANT...
...WOULD LORD BELASCO ENTRUST THE PROTECTION OF HIS HOME?


KURT WAGNER WAS MY BROTHER'S GOOD FRIEND, AND MINE. HE TOLD ME BEDTIME STORIES AND MADE ME LAUGH WHEN I WAS SAD.
THIS CREATURE IS AS TWISTED INSIDE AS OUT. IT BEARS NIGHTCRAWLER'S FACE AND NAME, BUT IT ISN'T HIM, NOT REALLY.
AND SO, I MUST REACT AS CAT TAUGHT ME, WITHOUT HESITATION OR MERCY.


FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DOES ME.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN, DARKCHILD, MY ABILITY TO TELEPORT?
OR THE DEXTERITY AND STRENGTH OF MY TAIL?
URRRGH!
CAT--
--LOOK OUT!
YOU HAVE SOME SMALL REPUTATION AS A SWORDS-WOMAN, KATZCHEN.
CARE TO TEST YOUR SKILL-- AND LUCK-- AGAINST ME?
WHAT'S THIS, PHASING INTO THE FLOOR?
HOW UN-SPORTING.
IS THE VAUNTED CAT... AFRAID?

I'M SURE CAT HAS GOOD REASONS FOR LEAVING...
... BUT I WISH SHE HADN'T.
YOU'VE STILL GOT ME TO DEAL WITH!
HOW BRAVELY SNARLS THE CUB.

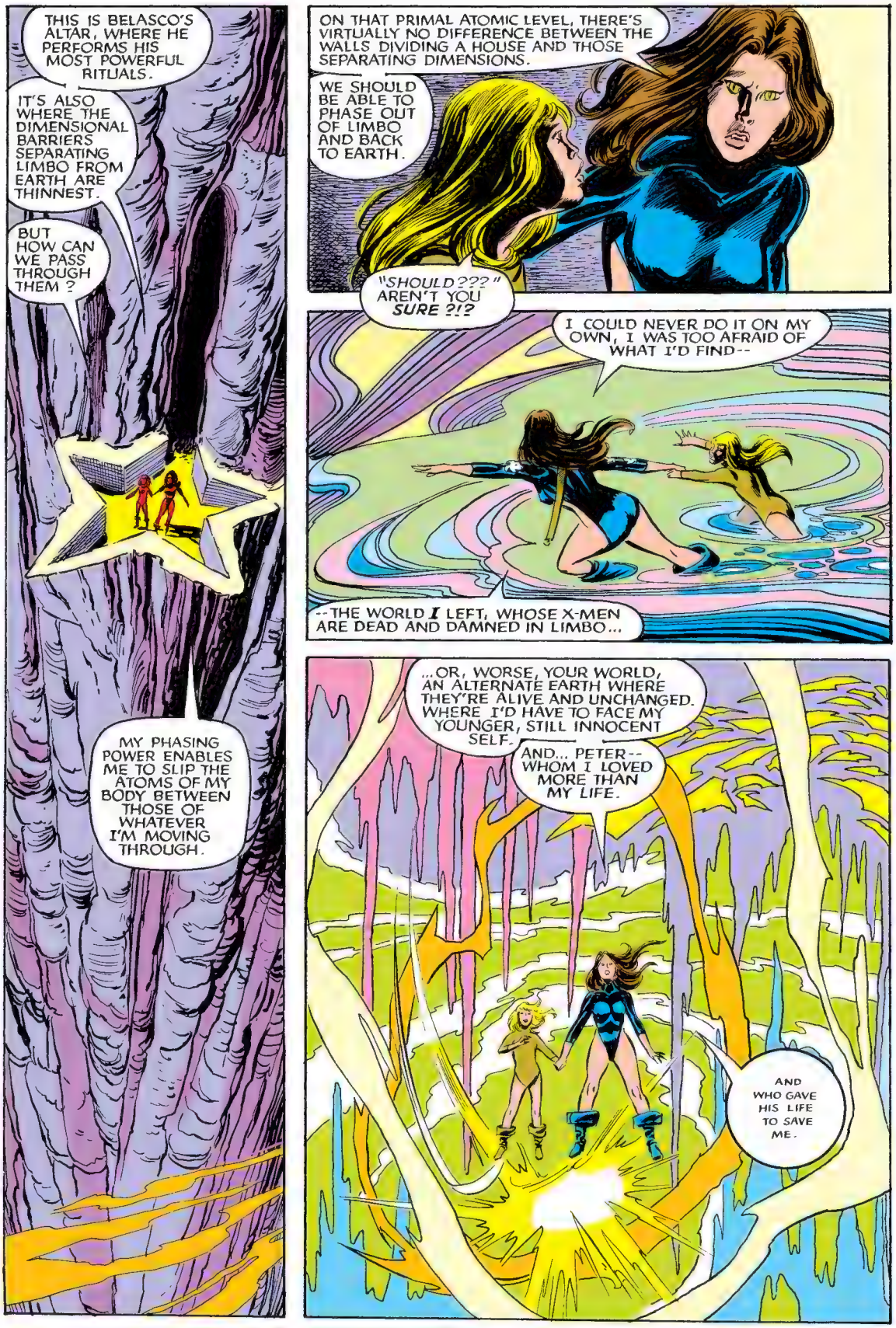

HOW HOPELESS IS HER CAUSE.
BAMF

I CAN STRIKE FROM ANY DIRECTION. AND REGARDLESS OF HOW QUICKLY YOU ACT...

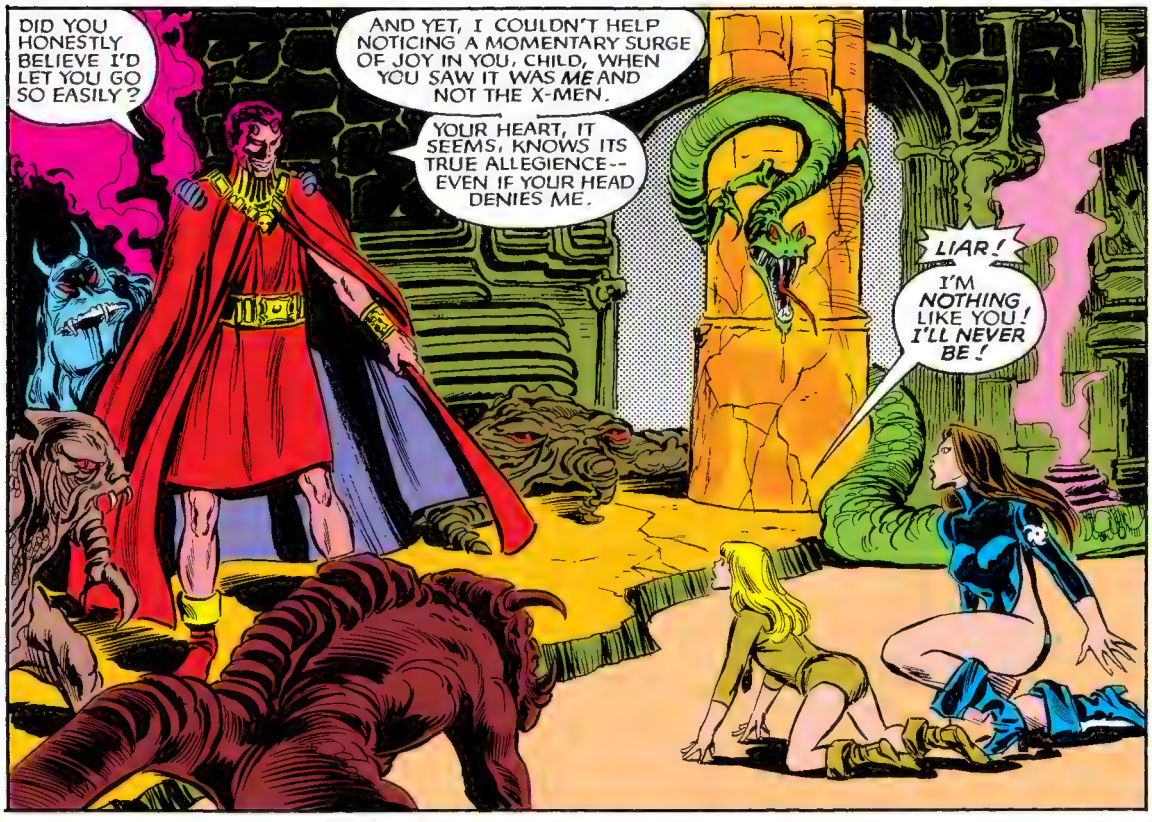
... I CAN BE GONE BEFORE YOU TOUCH ME.
WHO'S THE COWARD NOW?!
I'M ONLY A GIRL, NIGHT-CRAWLER, WHAT'RE YOU AFRAID OF?! WHY DON'T YOU STAND AND FACE ME?!
BAMF

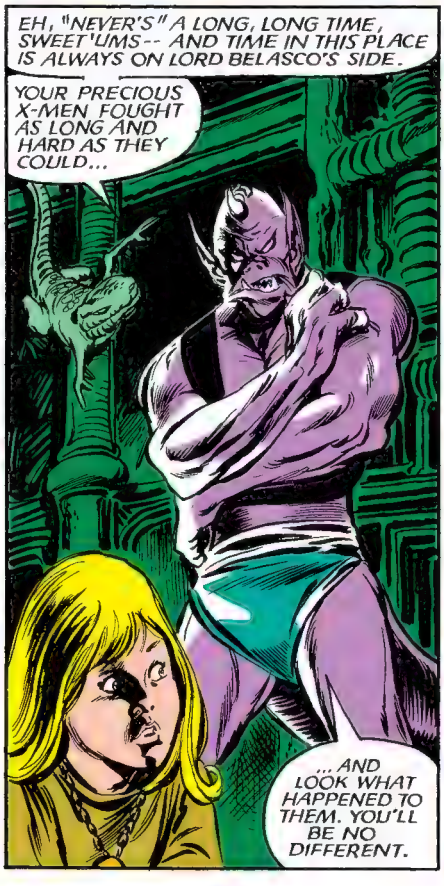
IF YOU INSIST, LEIBLING.
WOULD YOU CARE TO EXCHANGE YOUR KNIFE FOR ONE OF MY SWORDS?
HE DOESN'T SEE CAT. I HAVE TO KEEP HIM WHERE HE IS, HIS ATTENTION ON ME, 'TIL SHE MAKES HER MOVE.

SHE GRABS HIM...
... PHASES HIS LEG INTO THE FLOOR...
YEARGH
... AND LETS GO.
FLESH AND BLOOD MERGE WITH STONE-- THE LEG IS IRREPAIRABLY SHATTERED.
IT'S AWFUL.
HIS SCREAMS SEEM TO LAST FOREVER...
... BEFORE CAT FINALLY PUTS AN END TO THEM.
I KNOW WE'D FOUGHT TO THE DEATH -- I'D TRIED MY BEST TO KILL HIM -- BUT I HADN'T IMAGINED IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS.
LOOKING AT NIGHTCRAWLER, I DON'T SEE THE DEMON HE IS...
... BUT THE MAN HE WAS...
STOP GAWKING, GIRL -- COME ON!
... AND MY HEART ALMOST CRACKS WITH GRIEF.


THIS IS BELASCO'S ALTAR, WHERE HE PERFORMS HIS MOST POWERFUL RITUALS.
IT'S ALSO WHERE THE DIMENSIONAL BARRIERS SEPARATING LIMBO FROM EARTH ARE THINNEST.
BUT HOW CAN WE PASS THROUGH THEM ?
MY PHASING POWER ENABLES ME TO SLIP THE ATOMS OF MY BODY BETWEEN THOSE OF WHATEVER I'M MOVING THROUGH.
ON THAT PRIMAL ATOMIC LEVEL, THERE'S VIRTUALLY NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WALLS DIVIDING A HOUSE AND THOSE SEPARATING DIMENSIONS.
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PHASE OUT OF LIMBO AND BACK TO EARTH.
"SHOULD???" AREN'T YOU SURE ?!?
I COULD NEVER DO IT ON MY OWN, I WAS TOO AFRAID OF WHAT I'D FIND--
--THE WORLD I LEFT, WHOSE X-MEN ARE DEAD AND DAMNED IN LIMBO...
...OR, WORSE, YOUR WORLD, AN ALTERNATE EARTH WHERE THEY'RE ALIVE AND UNCHANGED. WHERE I'D HAVE TO FACE MY YOUNGER, STILL INNOCENT SELF.
AND... PETER-- WHOM I LOVED MORE THAN MY LIFE.
AND WHO GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE ME.

OURS IS A WONDROUS JOURNEY, THROUGH REALMS OF SPARKLY LIGHTS -- MORE COLORS THAN I EVER DREAMED EXISTED! I HEAR MUSIC-- SO BEAUTIFUL I WANT TO STAY AND LISTEN FOREVER.
BUT CAT PULLS ME ON.
I SEE OUR DESTINATION-- THE ISLAND THAT'S THE X-MEN'S NEW HEADQUARTERS, WHERE BELASCO FIRST FOUND ME. I'M EAGER TO BE HOME.
YET, AT THE SAME TIME, I FEEL AS IF I'M LEAVING HOME. I WANT TO GO BACK AS MUCH AS FORWARD.
THE HARDER I TRY TO BANISH BELASCO FROM MY THOUGHTS, THE MORE CLEARLY I SEE HIM, REMEMBER HIM, LONG FOR HIM.
I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING! I'VE LOST HER!
WAIT! THERE SHE IS!
Oh, KITTY! IS IT REALLY--
--YOU!?!
WHY, ILLYANA, YOU LOOK SO DELIGHTFULLY SURPRISED!


DID YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE I'D LET YOU GO SO EASILY?
AND YET, I COULDN'T HELP NOTICING A MOMENTARY SURGE OF JOY IN YOU, CHILD, WHEN YOU SAW IT WAS ME AND NOT THE X-MEN.
YOUR HEART, IT SEEMS, KNOWS ITS TRUE ALLEGIENCE-- EVEN IF YOUR HEAD DENIES ME.
LIAR!
I'M NOTHING LIKE YOU! I'LL NEVER BE!

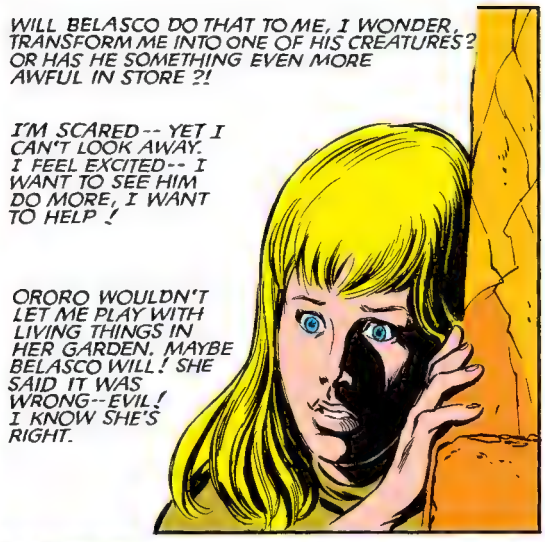

EH, "NEVER'S" A LONG, LONG TIME, SWEET'UMS-- AND TIME IN THIS PLACE IS ALWAYS ON LORD BELASCO'S SIDE.
YOUR PRECIOUS X-MEN FOUGHT AS LONG AND HARD AS THEY COULD...
... AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM. YOU'LL BE NO DIFFERENT.

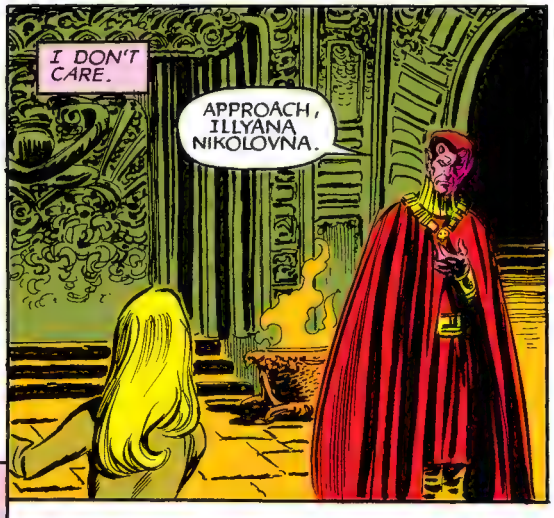
NOW, NOW, S'YM-- MUSTN'T FRIGHTEN THE YOUNGLING. I WANT YOU TO BE FRIENDS.
A PITY ABOUT NIGHTCRAWLER. HE HAD HIS LIMITATIONS, BUT HE WAS AN ADEQUATE SERVANT...

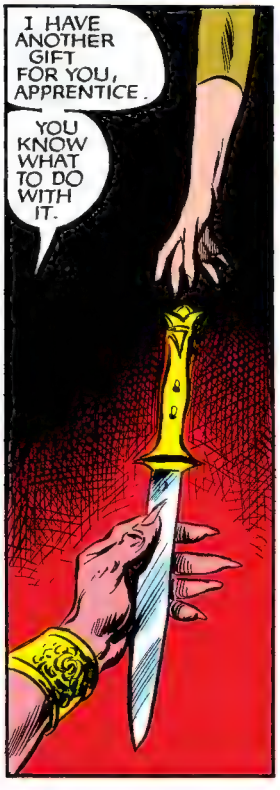
... AND GOOD HELP THESE DAYS IS SO HARD TO FIND. SINCE YOU KILLED HIM, CAT, IT'S ONLY FITTING...
...THAT YOU TAKE HIS PLACE.

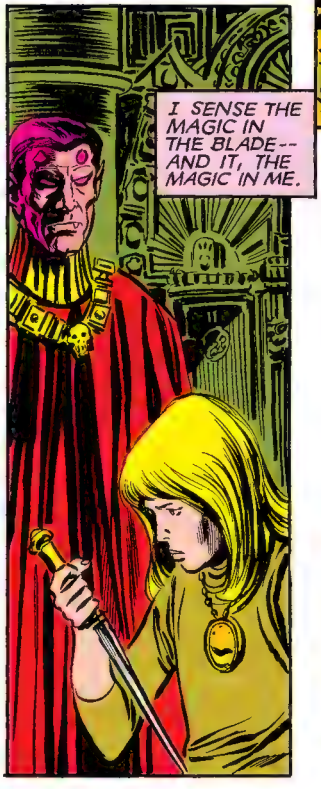
SINCE YOU MISS NIGHT-CRAWLER SO MUCH BUTCHER--
--WHY DON'T YOU JOIN HIM!
YOUR IMPERTINANCE--AND BRAVADO--NO LONGER AMUSE ME, CAT.
STOP WHERE YOU ARE.
SHE DOES.
HER FACE IS A TERRIFYING MIX OF CONFUSION AND DESPAIR. SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HER...
...WHY HER BODY IS NO LONGER HER OWN.
YOUR SWORD, CAT--THANK YOU.
I SEE NOW MY MISTAKE. I LEFT YOU TOO HUMAN--WHICH, IN TURN, GAVE YOU A SEMBLANCE OF FREE WILL--
--BUT THAT, FORTUNATELY, IS EASILY RECTIFIED.
CAT YOU ARE IN NAME.
LET YOU NOW BECOME ONE IN FACT.

LIFE IS SO MUCH SIMPLER WHEN YOU LACK THE CAPACITY TO WORRY ABOUT IT. THINGS EITHER ARE OR ARE NOT, THEY BRING PAIN OR PLEASURE. NEEDS -- DESIRES -- ARE BASIC AND AS EASILY SATISFIED.
DOES THIS FEEL GOOD, MY CAT, SHALL I STROKE YOU MORE?
PURRR

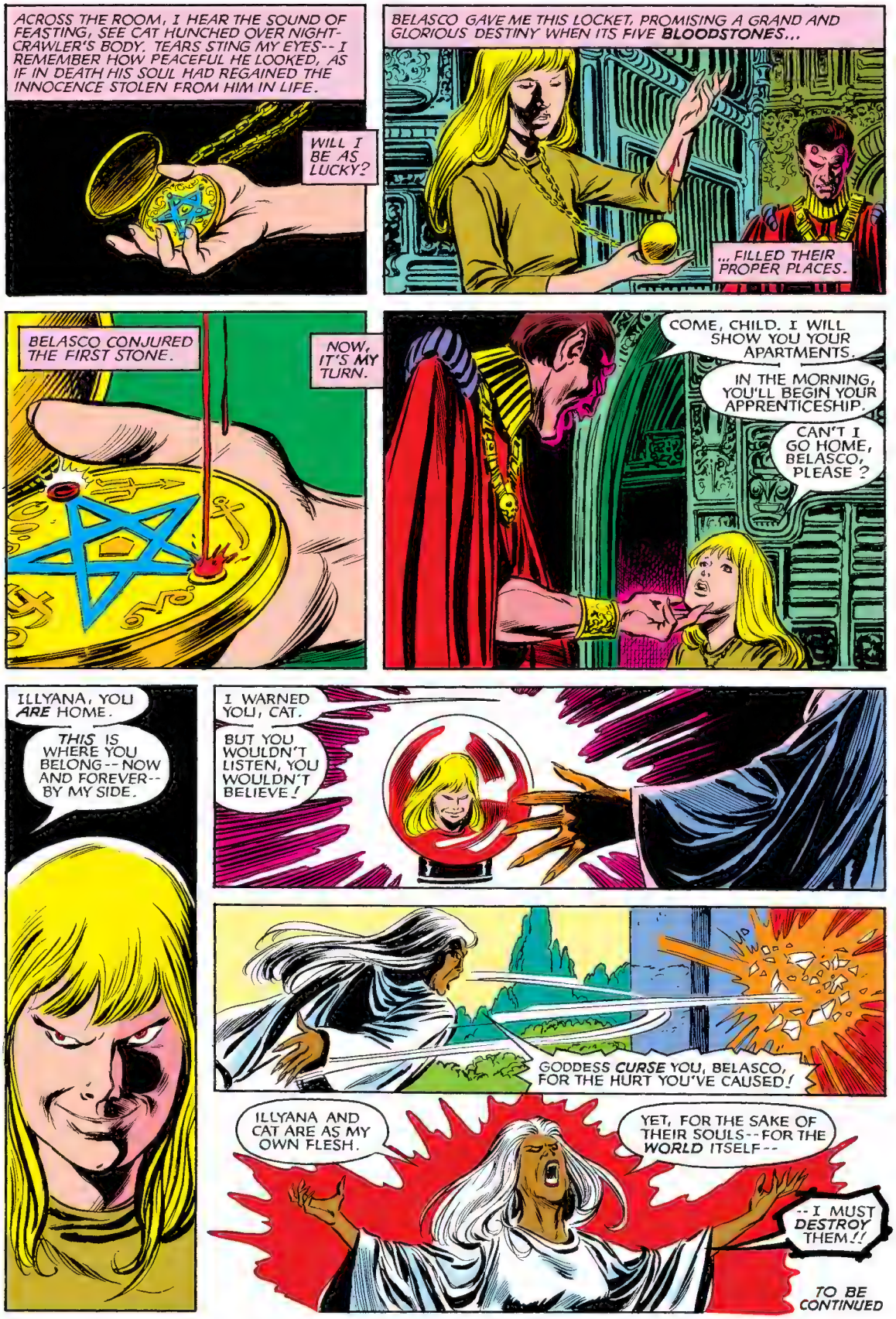

WILL BELASCO DO THAT TO ME, I WONDER, TRANSFORM ME INTO ONE OF HIS CREATURES? OR HAS HE SOMETHING EVEN MORE AWFUL IN STORE ?!
I'M SCARED -- YET I CAN'T LOOK AWAY. I FEEL EXCITED -- I WANT TO SEE HIM DO MORE, I WANT TO HELP !
ORORO WOULDN'T LET ME PLAY WITH LIVING THINGS IN HER GARDEN. MAYBE BELASCO WILL! SHE SAID IT WAS WRONG--EVIL! I KNOW SHE'S RIGHT.


I DON'T CARE.
APPROACH, ILLYANA NIKOLOVNA.


I HAVE ANOTHER GIFT FOR YOU, APPRENTICE.
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.


I SENSE THE MAGIC IN THE BLADE -- AND IT, THE MAGIC IN ME.

I COULD KILL BELASCO, SHOVE THE KNIFE INTO HIS BLACK HEART, WE'RE STANDING SO CLOSE TOGETHER NOT EVEN S'YM COULD PREVENT IT. BELASCO'S SMILE DARES ME TO TRY.
I CUT MYSELF INSTEAD.


ACROSS THE ROOM, I HEAR THE SOUND OF FEASTING, SEE CAT HUNCHED OVER NIGHTCRAWLER'S BODY. TEARS STING MY EYES-- I REMEMBER HOW PEACEFUL HE LOOKED, AS IF IN DEATH HIS SOUL HAD REGAINED THE INNOCENCE STOLEN FROM HIM IN LIFE.
WILL I BE AS LUCKY?
BELASCO GAVE ME THIS LOCKET, PROMISING A GRAND AND GLORIOUS DESTINY WHEN ITS FIVE BLOODSTONES...
... FILLED THEIR PROPER PLACES.
BELASCO CONJURED THE FIRST STONE.
NOW, IT'S MY TURN.
COME, CHILD. I WILL SHOW YOU YOUR APARTMENTS.
IN THE MORNING, YOU'LL BEGIN YOUR APPRENTICESHIP.
CAN'T I GO HOME, BELASCO, PLEASE?
ILLYANA, YOU ARE HOME.
THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG-- NOW AND FOREVER-- BY MY SIDE.
I WARNED YOU, CAT.
BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE!
GODDESS CURSE YOU, BELASCO, FOR THE HURT YOU'VE CAUSED!
ILLYANA AND CAT ARE AS MY OWN FLESH.
YET, FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR SOULS-- FOR THE WORLD ITSELF--
-- I MUST DESTROY THEM!!
TO BE CONTINUED

MARVEL
FROM THE X-MEN
STORM AND ILLYANA
MAGIK
#3 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
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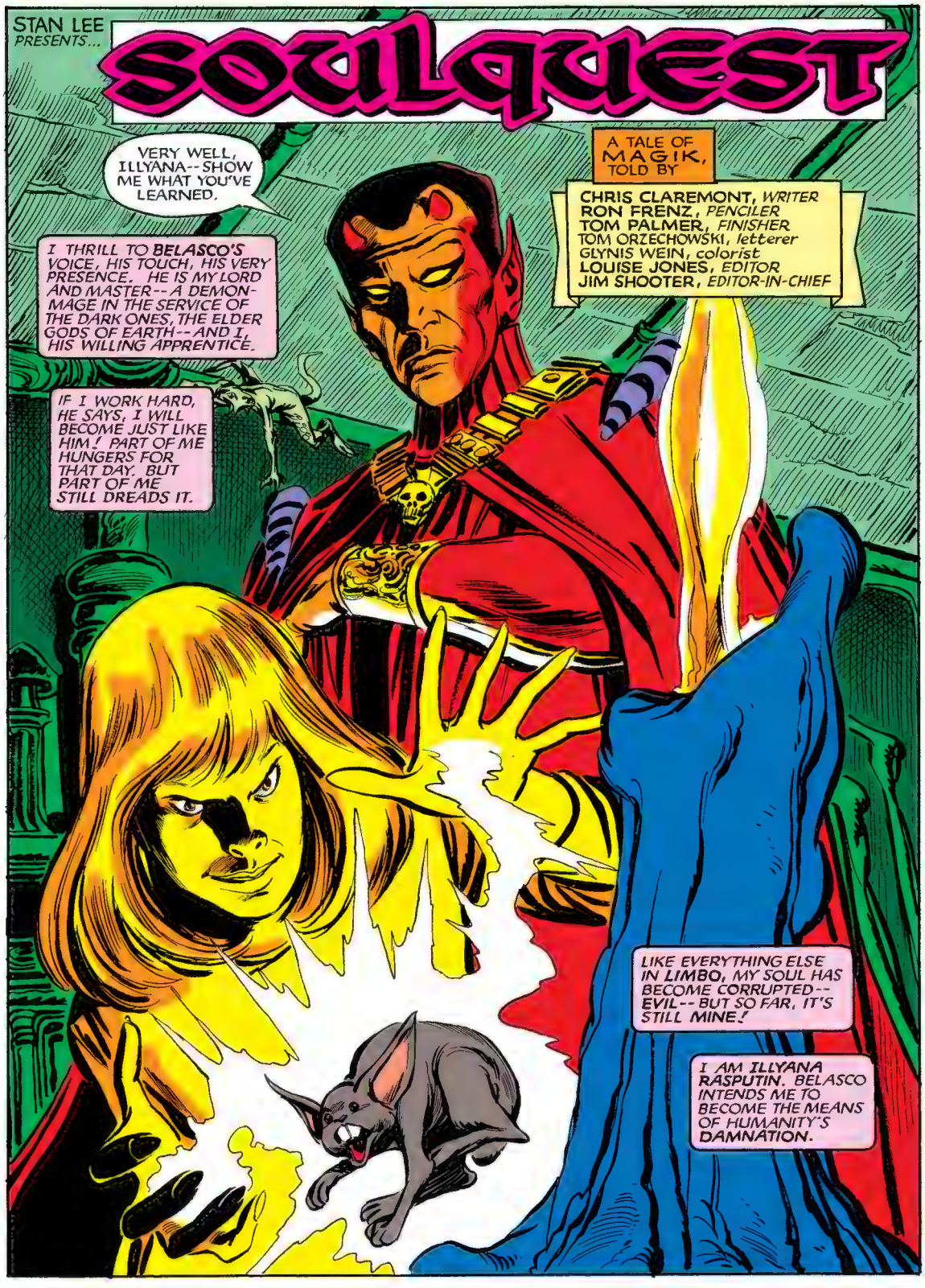
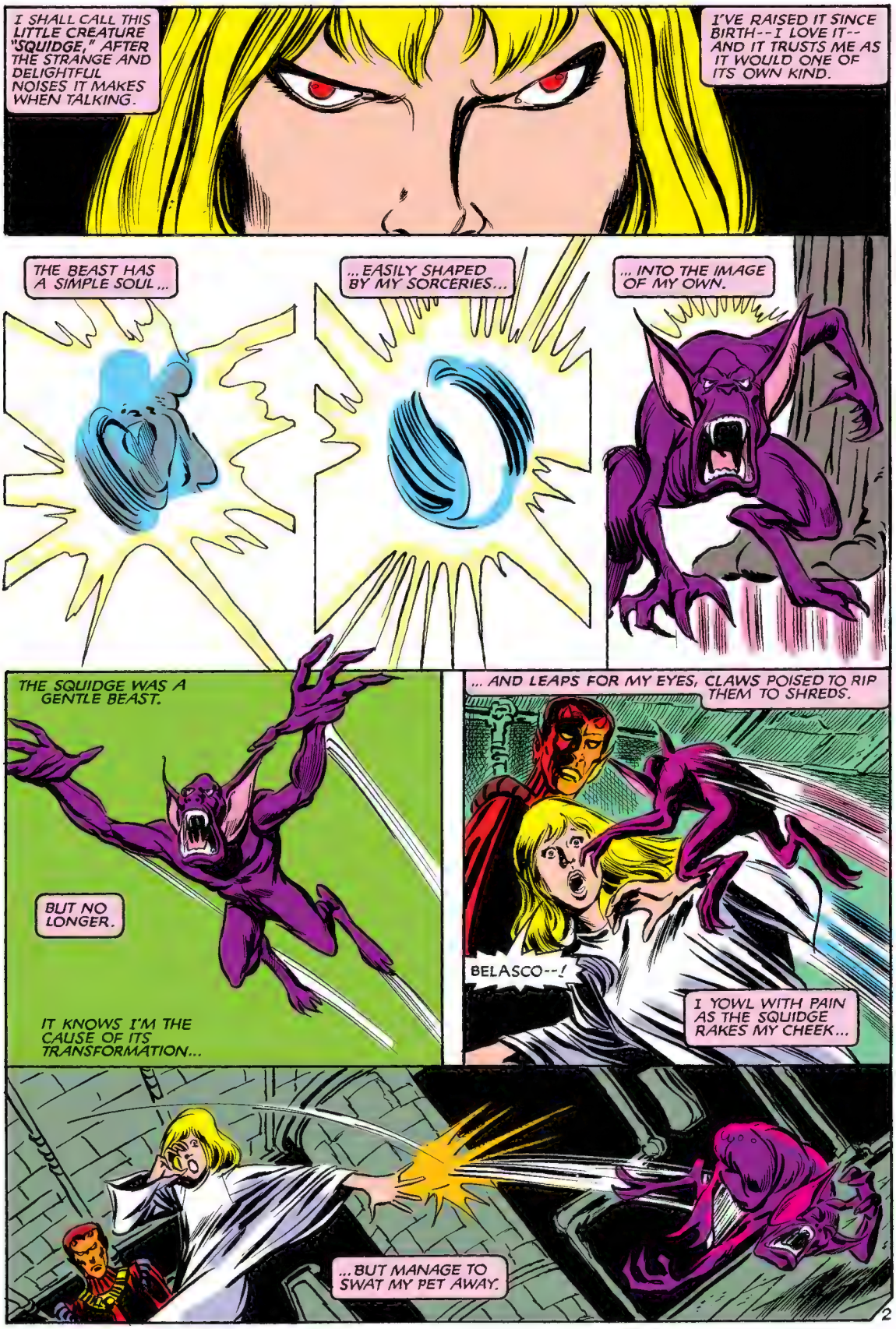
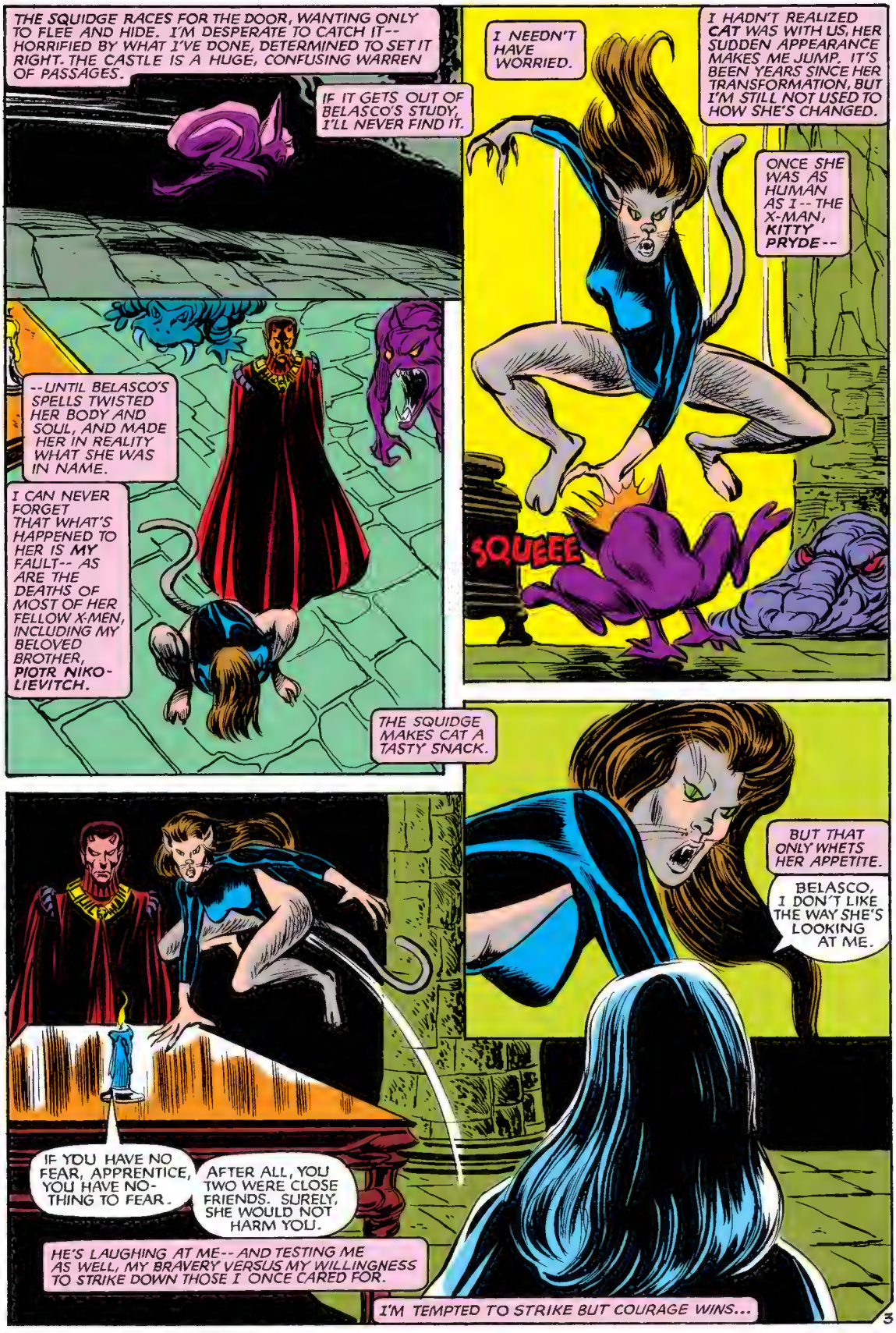
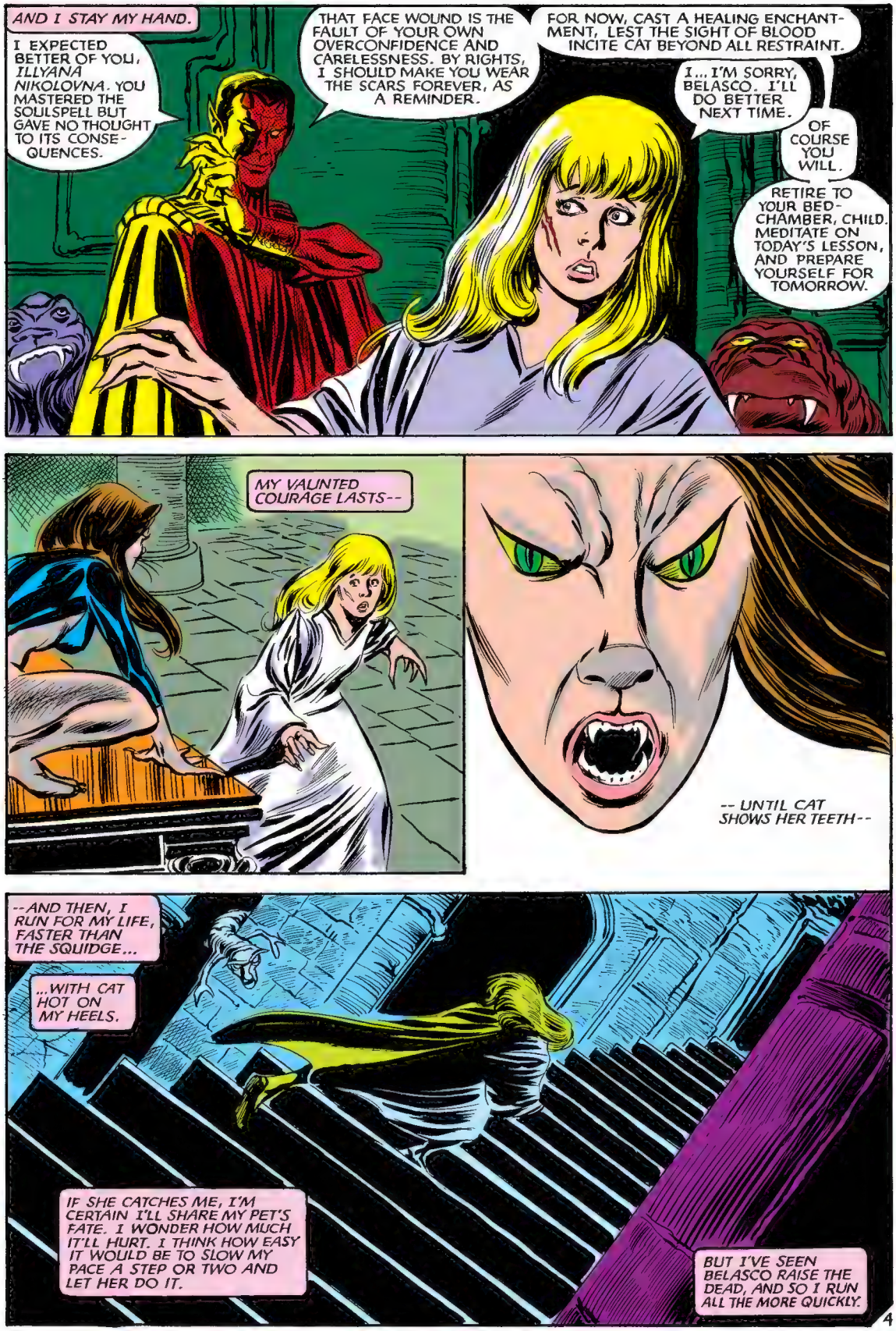
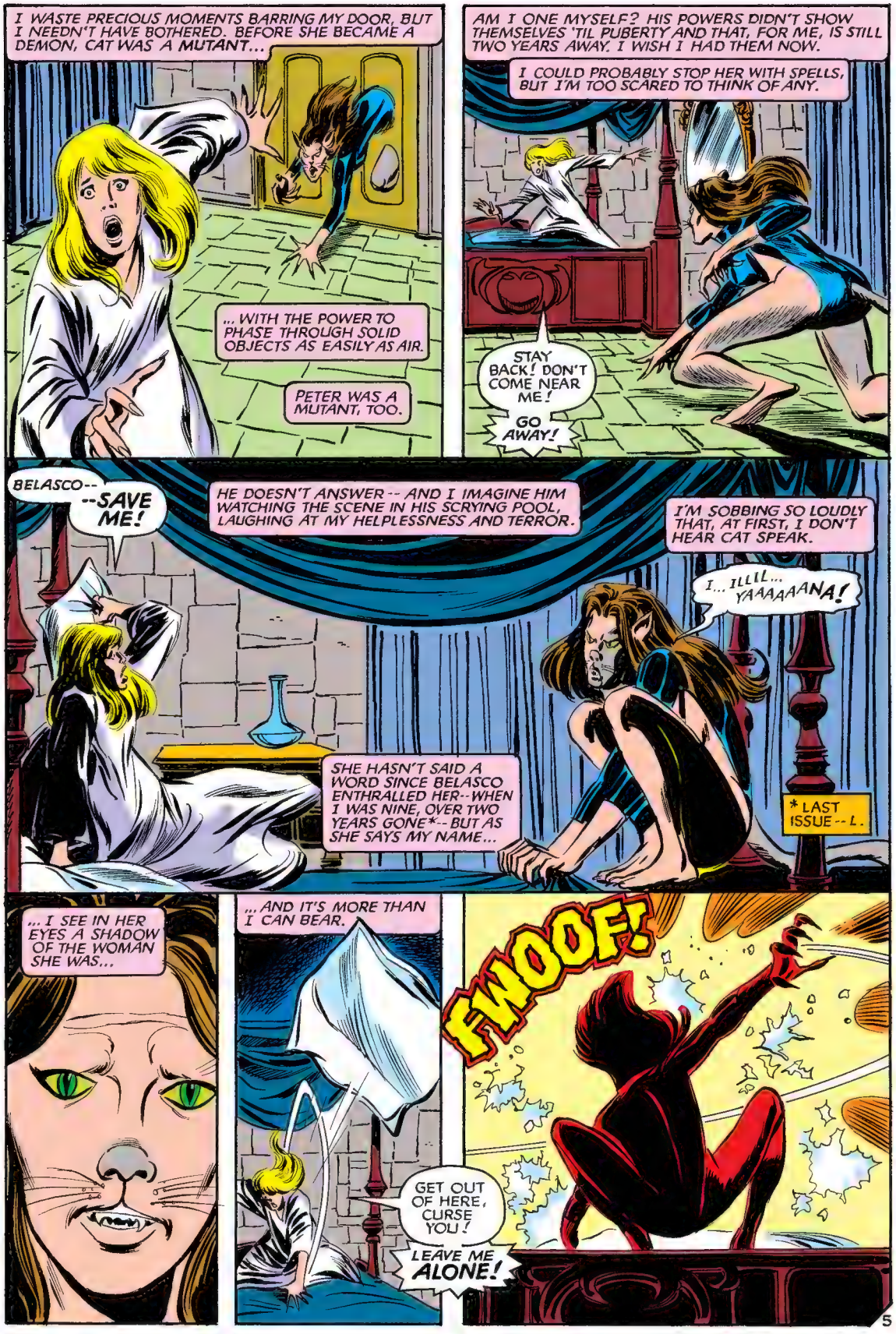
60¢
3
FEB
02973
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MY LOVE OR STORM'S LIFE, ILLYANA--
--CHOOSE!

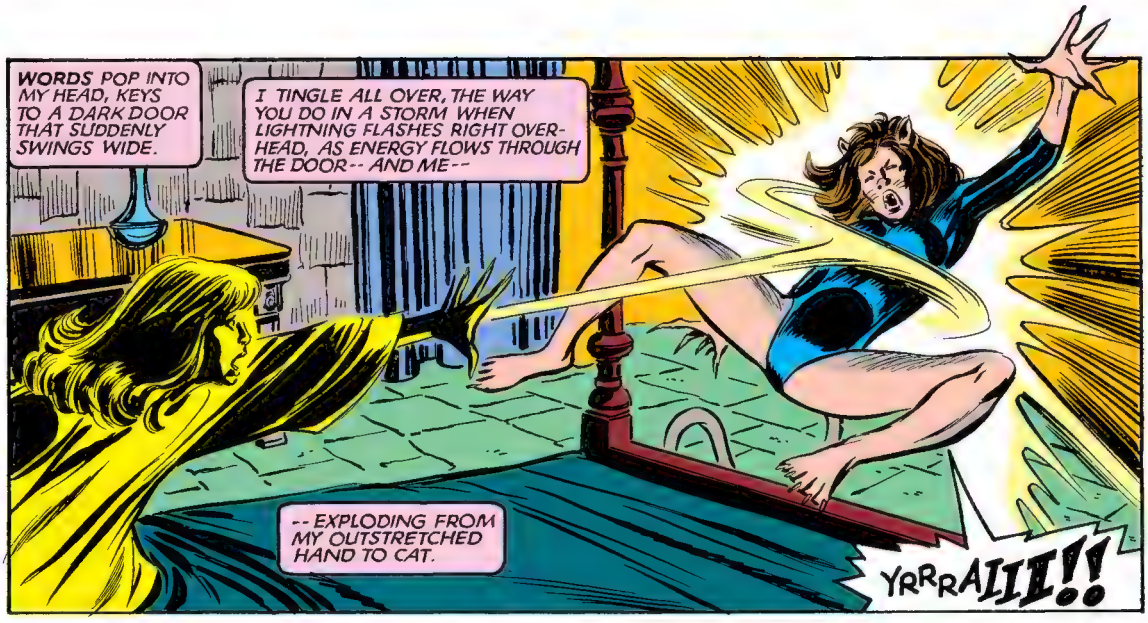

STAN LEE PRESENTS...
SOULQUEST
A TALE OF MAGIK, TOLD BY
CHRIS CLAREMONT, WRITER
RON FRENZ, PENCILER
TOM PALMER, FINISHER
TOM ORZECHOWSKI, letterer
GLYNIS WEIN, colorist
LOUISE JONES, EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
VERY WELL, ILLYANA--SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED.
I THRILL TO BELASCO'S VOICE, HIS TOUCH, HIS VERY PRESENCE. HE IS MY LORD AND MASTER--A DEMON-MAGE IN THE SERVICE OF THE DARK ONES, THE ELDER GODS OF EARTH--AND I, HIS WILLING APPRENTICE.
IF I WORK HARD, HE SAYS, I WILL BECOME JUST LIKE HIM! PART OF ME HUNGERS FOR THAT DAY. BUT PART OF ME STILL DREADS IT.
LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN LIMBO, MY SOUL HAS BECOME CORRUPTED--EVIL--BUT SO FAR, IT'S STILL MINE!
I AM ILLYANA RASPUTIN. BELASCO INTENDS ME TO BECOME THE MEANS OF HUMANITY'S DAMNATION.

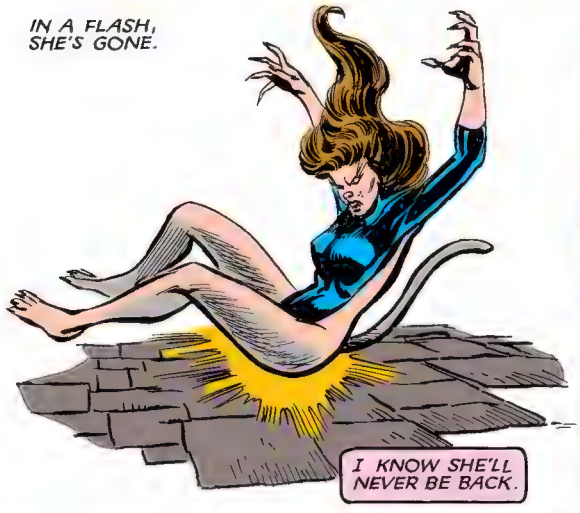

I SHALL CALL THIS LITTLE CREATURE "SQUIDGE," AFTER THE STRANGE AND DELIGHTFUL NOISES IT MAKES WHEN TALKING.
I'VE RAISED IT SINCE BIRTH--I LOVE IT--AND IT TRUSTS ME AS IT WOULD ONE OF ITS OWN KIND.
THE BEAST HAS A SIMPLE SOUL...
...EASILY SHAPED BY MY SORCERIES...
...INTO THE IMAGE OF MY OWN.
THE SQUIDGE WAS A GENTLE BEAST.
BUT NO LONGER.
IT KNOWS I'M THE CAUSE OF ITS TRANSFORMATION...
... AND LEAPS FOR MY EYES, CLAWS POISED TO RIP THEM TO SHREDS.
BELASCO--!
I YOWL WITH PAIN AS THE SQUIDGE RAKES MY CHEEK...
...BUT MANAGE TO SWAT MY PET AWAY.

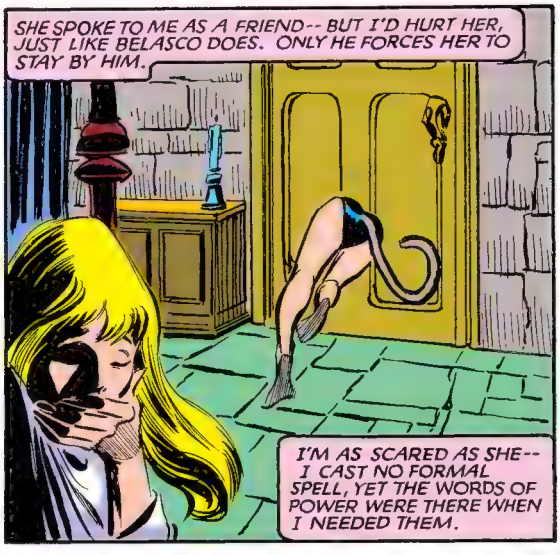

THE SQUIDGE RACES FOR THE DOOR, WANTING ONLY TO FLEE AND HIDE. I'M DESPERATE TO CATCH IT-- HORRIFIED BY WHAT I'VE DONE, DETERMINED TO SET IT RIGHT. THE CASTLE IS A HUGE, CONFUSING WARREN OF PASSAGES.
IF IT GETS OUT OF BELASCO'S STUDY, I'LL NEVER FIND IT.
I NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED.
I HADN'T REALIZED CAT WAS WITH US. HER SUDDEN APPEARANCE MAKES ME JUMP. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE HER TRANSFORMATION, BUT I'M STILL NOT USED TO HOW SHE'S CHANGED.
ONCE SHE WAS AS HUMAN AS I -- THE X-MAN, KITTY PRYDE--
SQUEEE
--UNTIL BELASCO'S SPELLS TWISTED HER BODY AND SOUL, AND MADE HER IN REALITY WHAT SHE WAS IN NAME.
I CAN NEVER FORGET THAT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER IS MY FAULT-- AS ARE THE DEATHS OF MOST OF HER FELLOW X-MEN, INCLUDING MY BELOVED BROTHER, PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH.
THE SQUIDGE MAKES CAT A TASTY SNACK.
BUT THAT ONLY WHETS HER APPETITE.
BELASCO, I DON'T LIKE THE WAY SHE'S LOOKING AT ME.
IF YOU HAVE NO FEAR, APPRENTICE, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
AFTER ALL, YOU TWO WERE CLOSE FRIENDS. SURELY, SHE WOULD NOT HARM YOU.
HE'S LAUGHING AT ME-- AND TESTING ME AS WELL, MY BRAVERY VERSUS MY WILLINGNESS TO STRIKE DOWN THOSE I ONCE CARED FOR.
I'M TEMPTED TO STRIKE BUT COURAGE WINS...

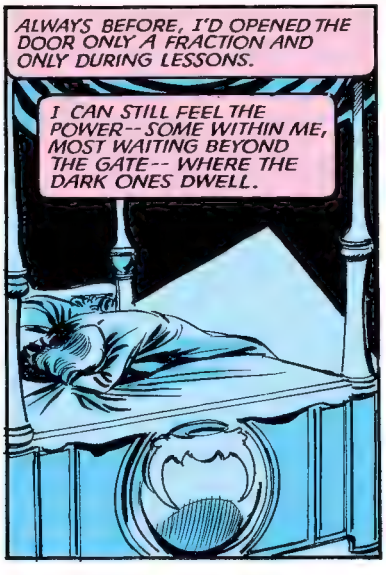

AND I STAY MY HAND.
I EXPECTED BETTER OF YOU, ILLYANA NIKOLOVNA. YOU MASTERED THE SOULSPELL BUT GAVE NO THOUGHT TO ITS CONSE-QUENCES.
THAT FACE WOUND IS THE FAULT OF YOUR OWN OVERCONFIDENCE AND CARELESSNESS. BY RIGHTS, I SHOULD MAKE YOU WEAR THE SCARS FOREVER, AS A REMINDER.
FOR NOW, CAST A HEALING ENCHANT-MENT, LEST THE SIGHT OF BLOOD INCITE CAT BEYOND ALL RESTRAINT.
I... I'M SORRY, BELASCO. I'LL DO BETTER NEXT TIME.
OF COURSE YOU WILL.
RETIRE TO YOUR BED-CHAMBER, CHILD. MEDITATE ON TODAY'S LESSON, AND PREPARE YOURSELF FOR TOMORROW.
MY VAUNTED COURAGE LASTS--
-- UNTIL CAT SHOWS HER TEETH--
--AND THEN, I RUN FOR MY LIFE, FASTER THAN THE SQUIDGE...
...WITH CAT HOT ON MY HEELS.
IF SHE CATCHES ME, I'M CERTAIN I'LL SHARE MY PET'S FATE. I WONDER HOW MUCH IT'LL HURT. I THINK HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO SLOW MY PACE A STEP OR TWO AND LET HER DO IT.
BUT I'VE SEEN BELASCO RAISE THE DEAD, AND SO I RUN ALL THE MORE QUICKLY.

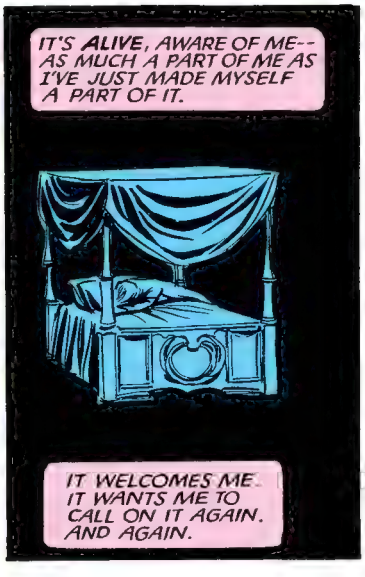

I WASTE PRECIOUS MOMENTS BARRING MY DOOR, BUT I NEEDN'T HAVE BOTHERED. BEFORE SHE BECAME A DEMON, CAT WAS A MUTANT...
... WITH THE POWER TO PHASE THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS AS EASILY AS AIR.
PETER WAS A MUTANT, TOO.
AM I ONE MYSELF? HIS POWERS DIDN'T SHOW THEMSELVES 'TIL PUBERTY AND THAT, FOR ME, IS STILL TWO YEARS AWAY. I WISH I HAD THEM NOW.
I COULD PROBABLY STOP HER WITH SPELLS, BUT I'M TOO SCARED TO THINK OF ANY.
STAY BACK! DON'T COME NEAR ME!
GO AWAY!
BELASCO--
--SAVE ME!
HE DOESN'T ANSWER -- AND I IMAGINE HIM WATCHING THE SCENE IN HIS SCRYING POOL, LAUGHING AT MY HELPLESSNESS AND TERROR.
I'M SOBBING SO LOUDLY THAT, AT FIRST, I DON'T HEAR CAT SPEAK.
I... ILLIL... YAAAAAANA!
SHE HASN'T SAID A WORD SINCE BELASCO ENTHRALLED HER--WHEN I WAS NINE, OVER TWO YEARS GONE*-- BUT AS SHE SAYS MY NAME...
* LAST ISSUE -- L.
... I SEE IN HER EYES A SHADOW OF THE WOMAN SHE WAS...
... AND IT'S MORE THAN I CAN BEAR.
GET OUT OF HERE, CURSE YOU!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
FWOOF!

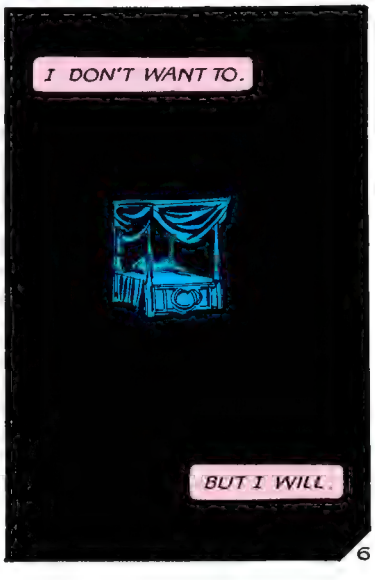

WORDS POP INTO MY HEAD, KEYS TO A DARK DOOR THAT SUDDENLY SWINGS WIDE.
I TINGLE ALL OVER, THE WAY YOU DO IN A STORM WHEN LIGHTNING FLASHES RIGHT OVERHEAD, AS ENERGY FLOWS THROUGH THE DOOR-- AND ME--
--EXPLODING FROM MY OUTSTRETCHED HAND TO CAT.
YRRRAIIII!!

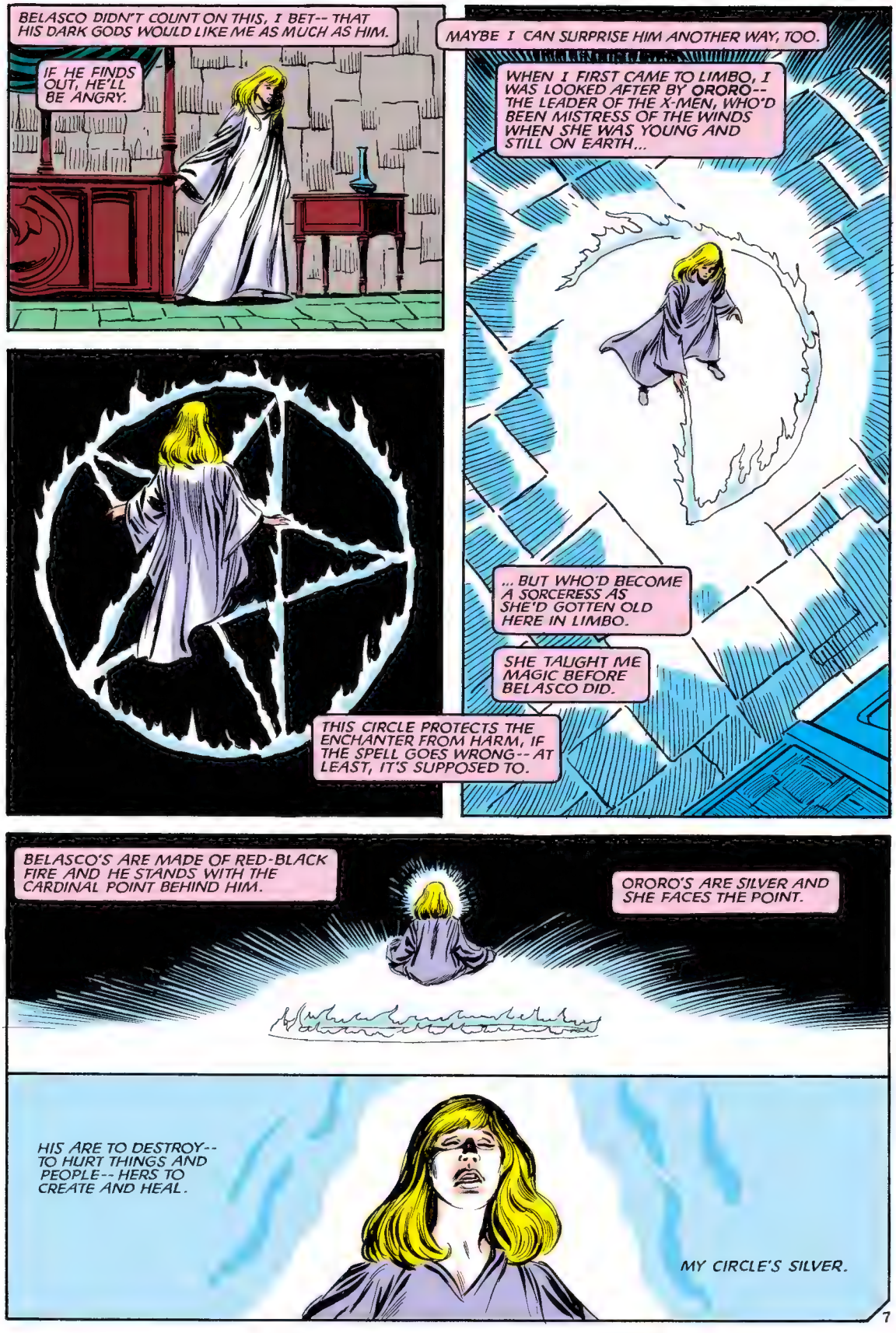

IN A FLASH, SHE'S GONE.
I KNOW SHE'LL NEVER BE BACK.

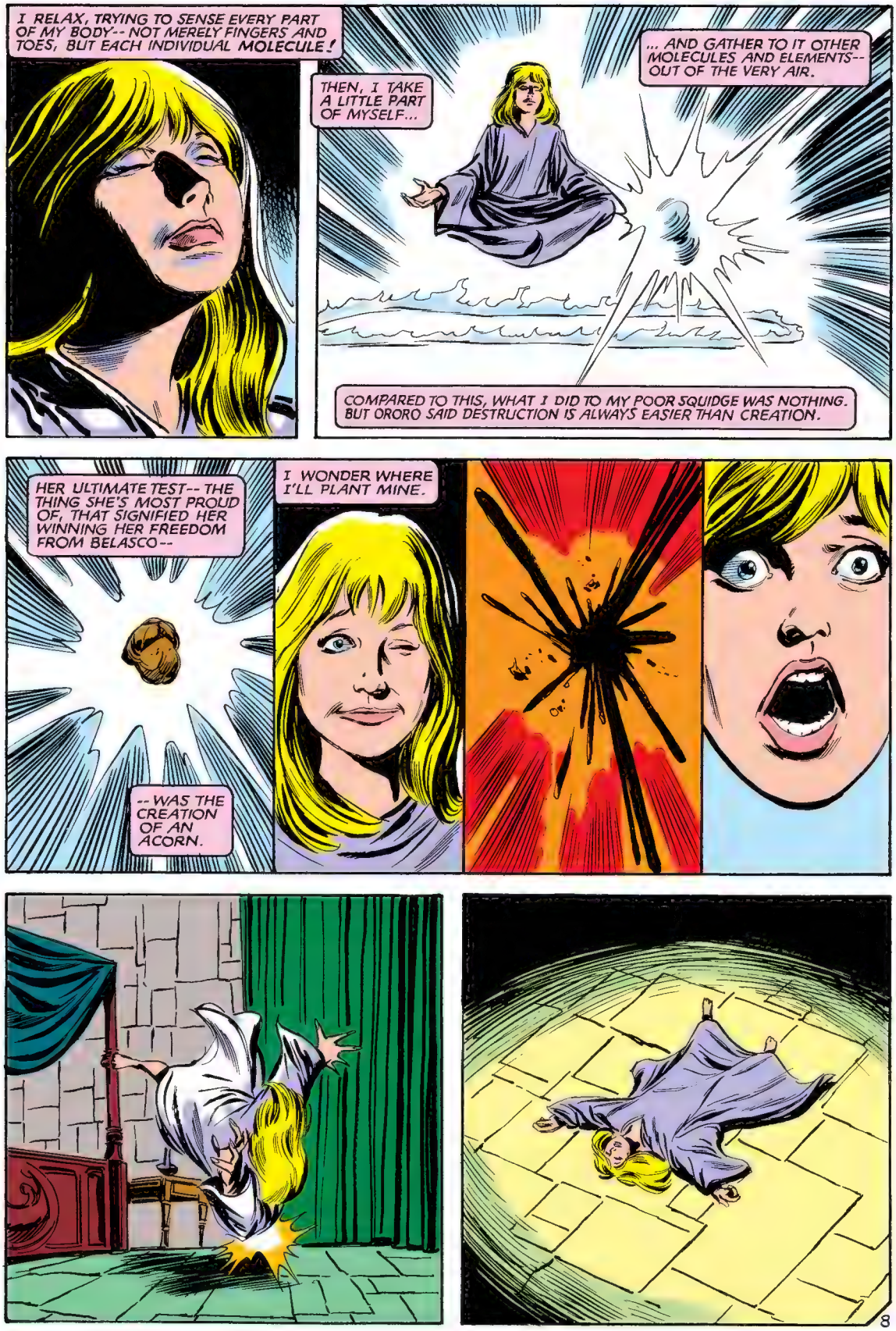

SHE SPOKE TO ME AS A FRIEND-- BUT I'D HURT HER, JUST LIKE BELASCO DOES. ONLY HE FORCES HER TO STAY BY HIM.
I'M AS SCARED AS SHE-- I CAST NO FORMAL SPELL, YET THE WORDS OF POWER WERE THERE WHEN I NEEDED THEM.

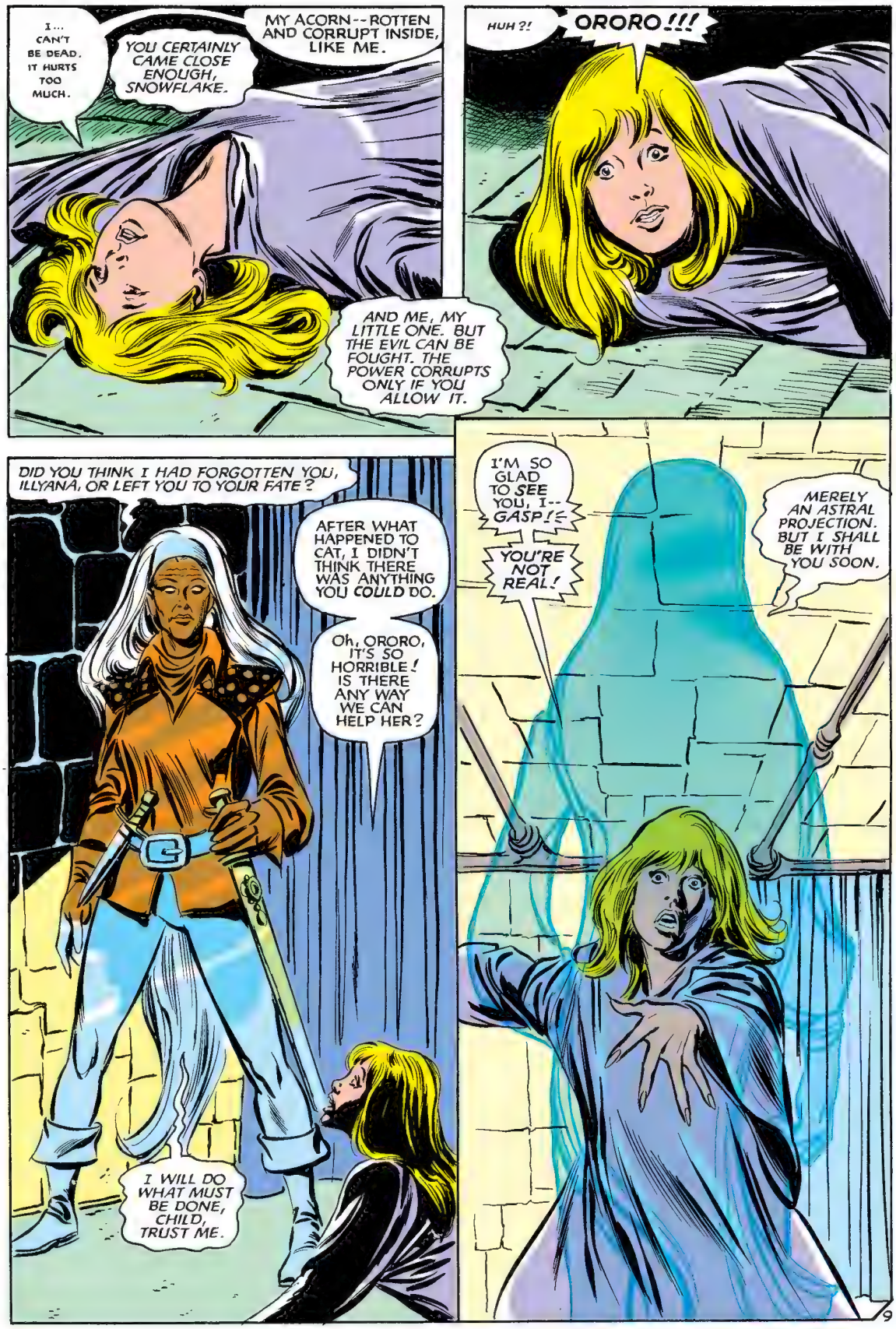

ALWAYS BEFORE, I'D OPENED THE DOOR ONLY A FRACTION AND ONLY DURING LESSONS.
I CAN STILL FEEL THE POWER-- SOME WITHIN ME, MOST WAITING BEYOND THE GATE-- WHERE THE DARK ONES DWELL.

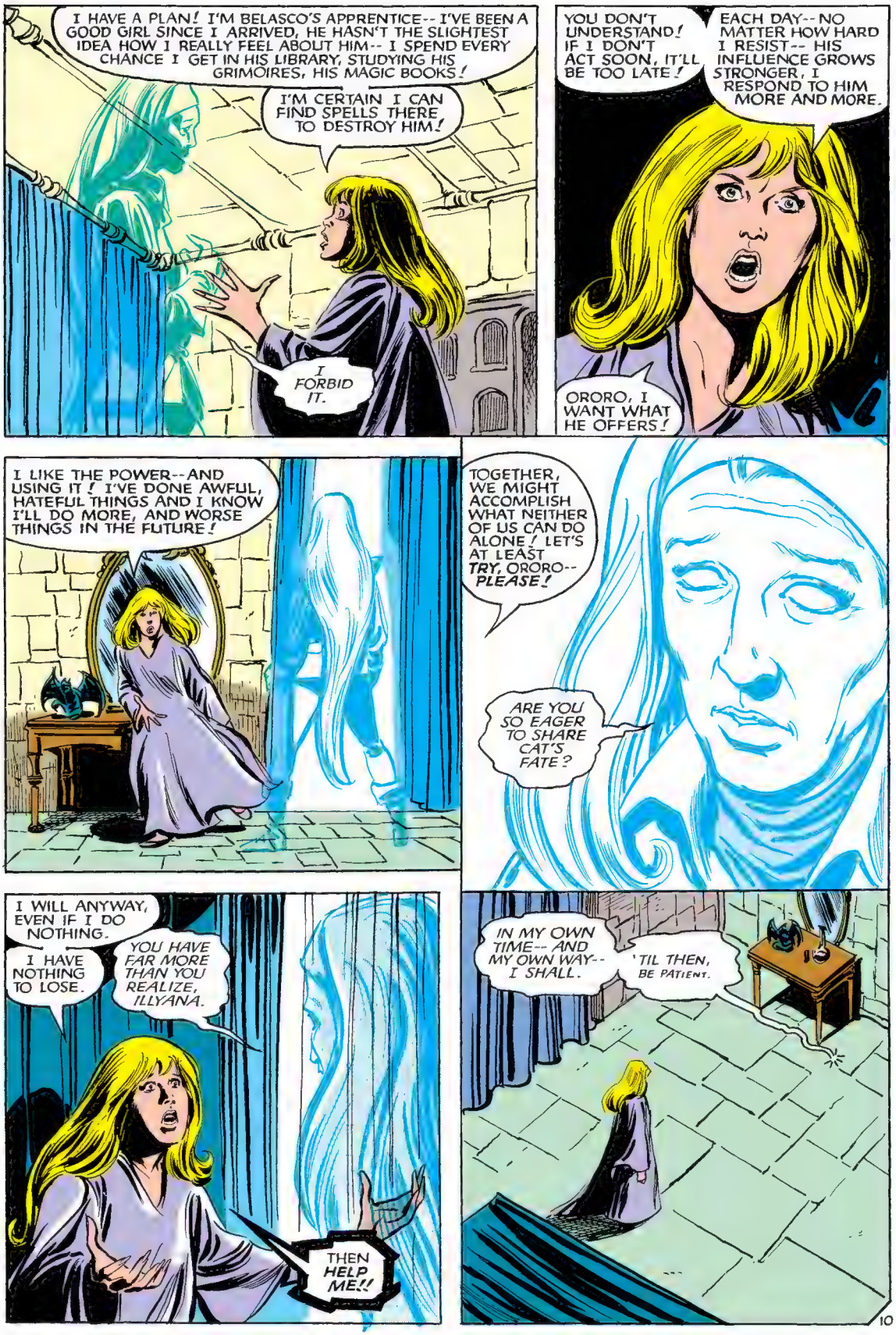

IT'S ALIVE, AWARE OF ME-- AS MUCH A PART OF ME AS I'VE JUST MADE MYSELF A PART OF IT.
IT WELCOMES ME. IT WANTS ME TO CALL ON IT AGAIN. AND AGAIN.

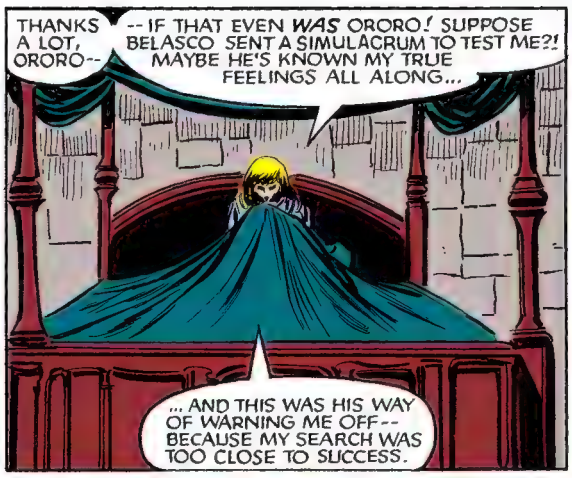

I DON'T WANT TO.
BUT I WILL.

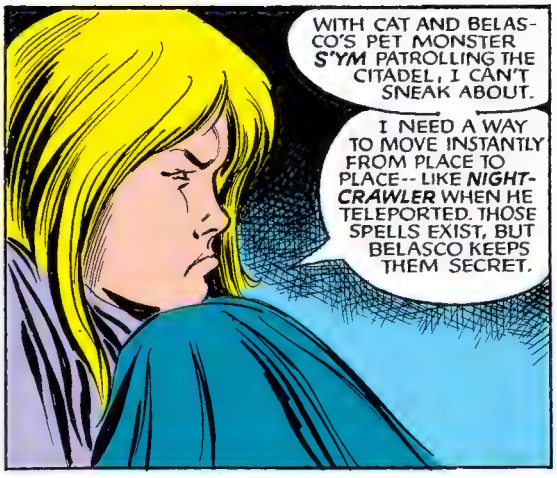

BELASCO DIDN'T COUNT ON THIS, I BET-- THAT HIS DARK GODS WOULD LIKE ME AS MUCH AS HIM.
IF HE FINDS OUT, HE'LL BE ANGRY.
MAYBE I CAN SURPRISE HIM ANOTHER WAY, TOO.
WHEN I FIRST CAME TO LIMBO, I WAS LOOKED AFTER BY ORORO-- THE LEADER OF THE X-MEN, WHO'D BEEN MISTRESS OF THE WINDS WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG AND STILL ON EARTH...
... BUT WHO'D BECOME A SORCERESS AS SHE'D GOTTEN OLD HERE IN LIMBO.
SHE TAUGHT ME MAGIC BEFORE BELASCO DID.
THIS CIRCLE PROTECTS THE ENCHANTER FROM HARM, IF THE SPELL GOES WRONG-- AT LEAST, IT'S SUPPOSED TO.
BELASCO'S ARE MADE OF RED-BLACK FIRE AND HE STANDS WITH THE CARDINAL POINT BEHIND HIM.
ORORO'S ARE SILVER AND SHE FACES THE POINT.
HIS ARE TO DESTROY-- TO HURT THINGS AND PEOPLE-- HERS TO CREATE AND HEAL.
MY CIRCLE'S SILVER.

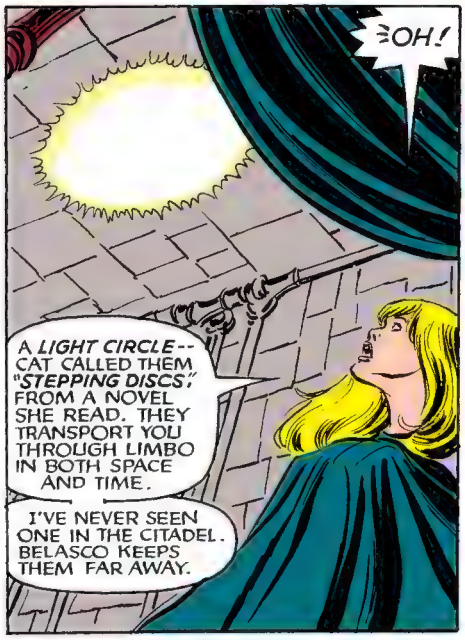

I RELAX, TRYING TO SENSE EVERY PART OF MY BODY-- NOT MERELY FINGERS AND TOES, BUT EACH INDIVIDUAL MOLECULE!
THEN, I TAKE A LITTLE PART OF MYSELF...
... AND GATHER TO IT OTHER MOLECULES AND ELEMENTS-- OUT OF THE VERY AIR.
COMPARED TO THIS, WHAT I DID TO MY POOR SQUIDGE WAS NOTHING. BUT ORORO SAID DESTRUCTION IS ALWAYS EASIER THAN CREATION.
HER ULTIMATE TEST-- THE THING SHE'S MOST PROUD OF, THAT SIGNIFIED HER WINNING HER FREEDOM FROM BELASCO--
-- WAS THE CREATION OF AN ACORN.
I WONDER WHERE I'LL PLANT MINE.

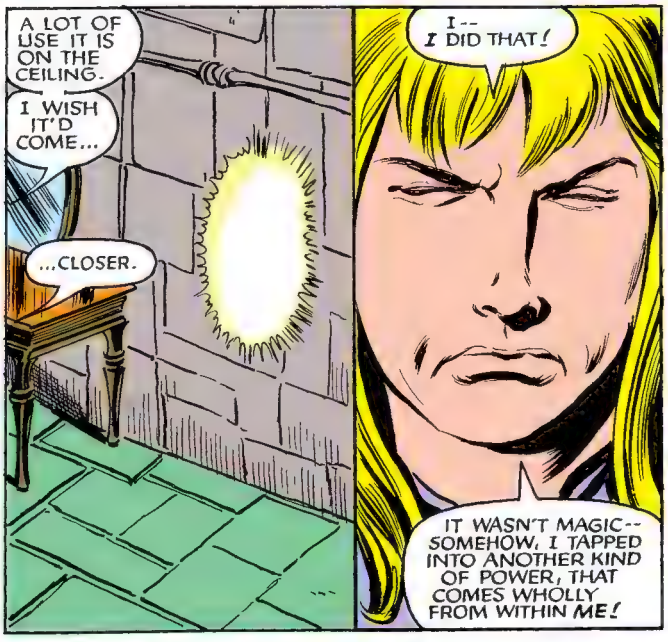

I... CAN'T BE DEAD. IT HURTS TOO MUCH.
YOU CERTAINLY CAME CLOSE ENOUGH, SNOWFLAKE.
MY ACORN--ROTTEN AND CORRUPT INSIDE, LIKE ME.
AND ME, MY LITTLE ONE. BUT THE EVIL CAN BE FOUGHT. THE POWER CORRUPTS ONLY IF YOU ALLOW IT.
HUH?!
ORORO!!!
DID YOU THINK I HAD FORGOTTEN YOU, ILLYANA, OR LEFT YOU TO YOUR FATE?
AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO CAT, I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANYTHING YOU COULD DO.
Oh, ORORO, IT'S SO HORRIBLE! IS THERE ANY WAY WE CAN HELP HER?
I WILL DO WHAT MUST BE DONE, CHILD, TRUST ME.
I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU, I--GASP!=
YOU'RE NOT REAL!
MERELY AN ASTRAL PROJECTION. BUT I SHALL BE WITH YOU SOON.


I HAVE A PLAN! I'M BELASCO'S APPRENTICE-- I'VE BEEN A GOOD GIRL SINCE I ARRIVED, HE HASN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA HOW I REALLY FEEL ABOUT HIM-- I SPEND EVERY CHANCE I GET IN HIS LIBRARY, STUDYING HIS GRIMOIRES, HIS MAGIC BOOKS!
I'M CERTAIN I CAN FIND SPELLS THERE TO DESTROY HIM!
I FORBID IT.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF I DON'T ACT SOON, IT'LL BE TOO LATE!
EACH DAY-- NO MATTER HOW HARD I RESIST-- HIS INFLUENCE GROWS STRONGER, I RESPOND TO HIM MORE AND MORE.
ORORO, I WANT WHAT HE OFFERS!
I LIKE THE POWER--AND USING IT! I'VE DONE AWFUL, HATEFUL THINGS AND I KNOW I'LL DO MORE, AND WORSE THINGS IN THE FUTURE!
TOGETHER, WE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH WHAT NEITHER OF US CAN DO ALONE! LET'S AT LEAST TRY, ORORO-- PLEASE!
ARE YOU SO EAGER TO SHARE CAT'S FATE?
I WILL ANYWAY, EVEN IF I DO NOTHING.
I HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.
YOU HAVE FAR MORE THAN YOU REALIZE, ILLYANA.
THEN HELP ME!!
IN MY OWN TIME-- AND MY OWN WAY-- I SHALL.
'TIL THEN, BE PATIENT.

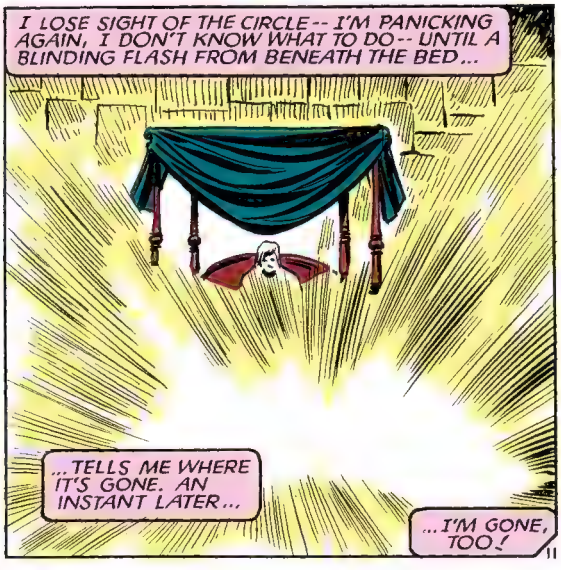

THANKS A LOT, ORORO--
-- IF THAT EVEN WAS ORORO! SUPPOSE BELASCO SENT A SIMULACRUM TO TEST ME?! MAYBE HE'S KNOWN MY TRUE FEELINGS ALL ALONG...
... AND THIS WAS HIS WAY OF WARNING ME OFF-- BECAUSE MY SEARCH WAS TOO CLOSE TO SUCCESS.

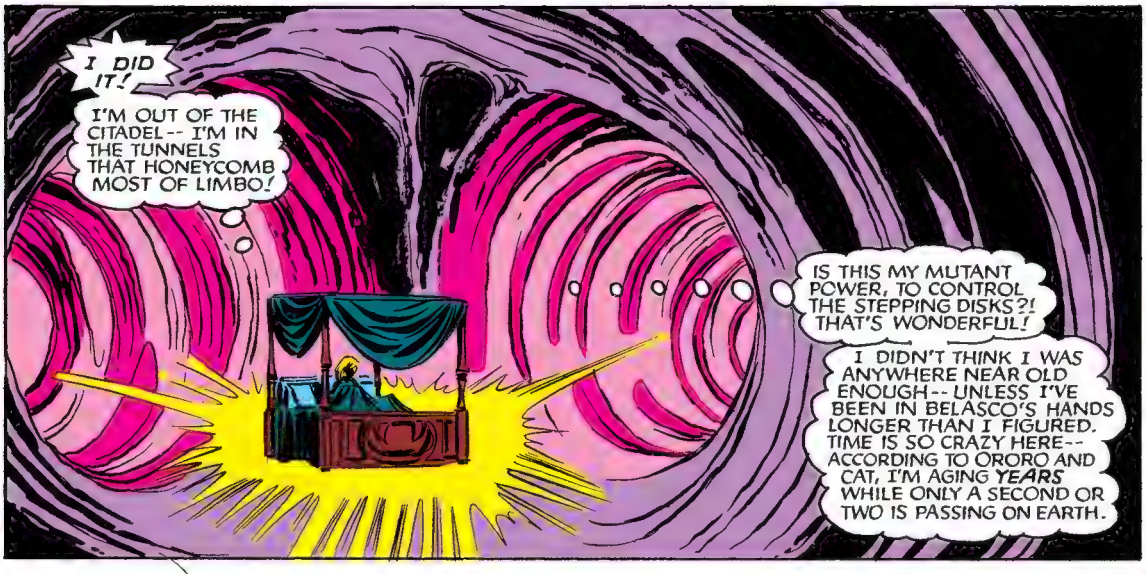

WITH CAT AND BELASCO'S PET MONSTER S'YM PATROLLING THE CITADEL, I CAN'T SNEAK ABOUT.
I NEED A WAY TO MOVE INSTANTLY FROM PLACE TO PLACE-- LIKE NIGHTCRAWLER WHEN HE TELEPORTED. THOSE SPELLS EXIST, BUT BELASCO KEEPS THEM SECRET.

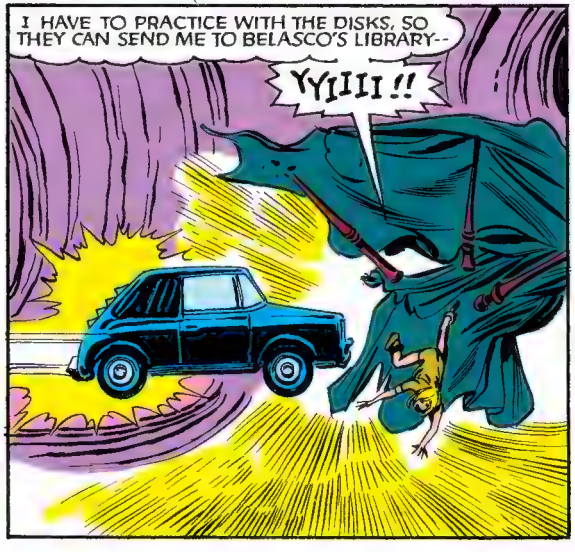

OH!
A LIGHT CIRCLE-- CAT CALLED THEM "STEPPING DISCS," FROM A NOVEL SHE READ. THEY TRANSPORT YOU THROUGH LIMBO IN BOTH SPACE AND TIME.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE IN THE CITADEL. BELASCO KEEPS THEM FAR AWAY.


A LOT OF USE IT IS ON THE CEILING.
I WISH IT'D COME...
...CLOSER.
I-- I DID THAT!
IT WASN'T MAGIC-- SOMEHOW, I TAPPED INTO ANOTHER KIND OF POWER, THAT COMES WHOLLY FROM WITHIN ME!

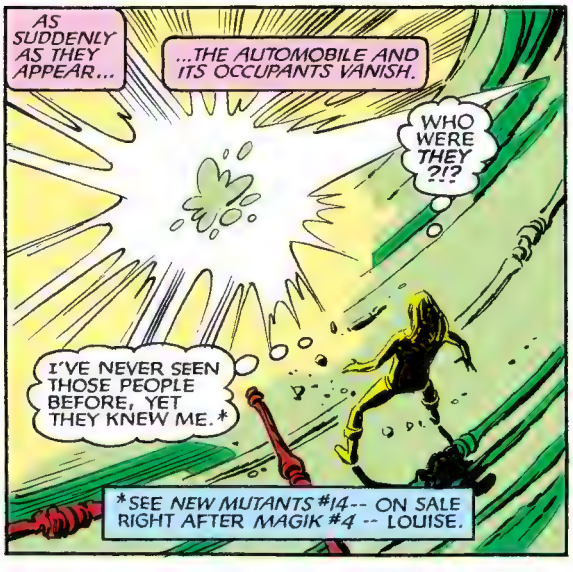
I MADE THE DISK DO WHAT I WANTED-- VOICES OUTSIDE-- BELASCO!
HE MUST KNOW WHAT I'M DOING-- WHAT A FOOL I WAS TO BELIEVE I WAS SAFE, SIMPLY BECAUSE I WAS IN MY ROOM! HE KNOWS EVERYTHING IN LIMBO-- IT'S HIS CREATION, HE'S ITS GOD!
IF HE CATCHES ME, HE'LL PUNISH ME!


I LOSE SIGHT OF THE CIRCLE-- I'M PANICKING AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO-- UNTIL A BLINDING FLASH FROM BENEATH THE BED...
...TELLS ME WHERE IT'S GONE. AN INSTANT LATER...
...I'M GONE, TOO!

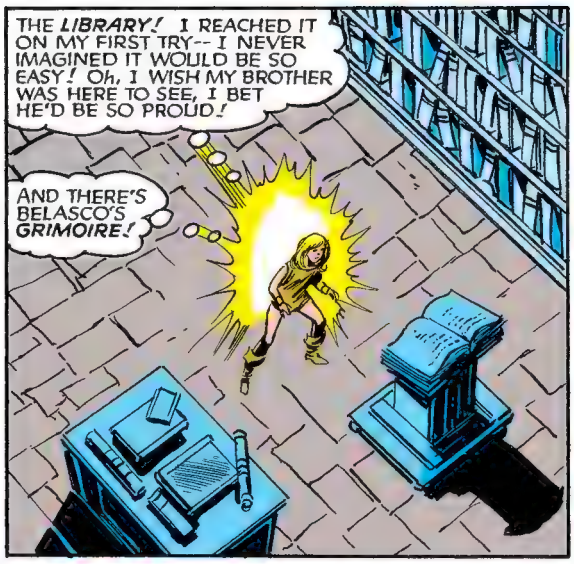

I DID IT!
I'M OUT OF THE CITADEL-- I'M IN THE TUNNELS THAT HONEYCOMB MOST OF LIMBO!
IS THIS MY MUTANT POWER, TO CONTROL THE STEPPING DISKS?! THAT'S WONDERFUL!
I DIDN'T THINK I WAS ANYWHERE NEAR OLD ENOUGH-- UNLESS I'VE BEEN IN BELASCO'S HANDS LONGER THAN I FIGURED. TIME IS SO CRAZY HERE-- ACCORDING TO ORORO AND CAT, I'M AGING YEARS WHILE ONLY A SECOND OR TWO IS PASSING ON EARTH.

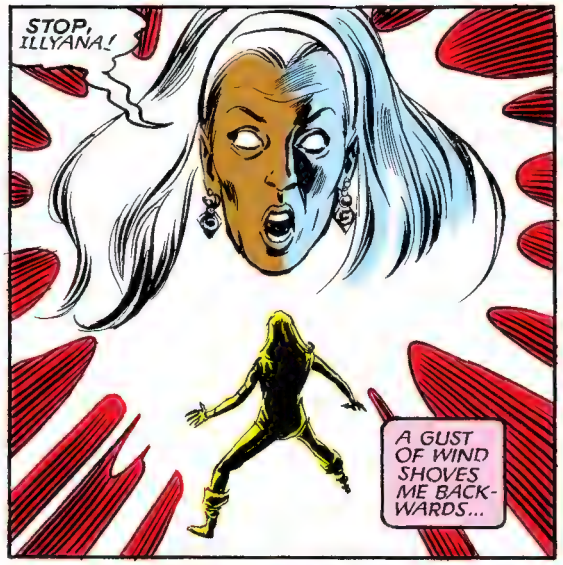

I HAVE TO PRACTICE WITH THE DISKS, SO THEY CAN SEND ME TO BELASCO'S LIBRARY--
YYIII !!

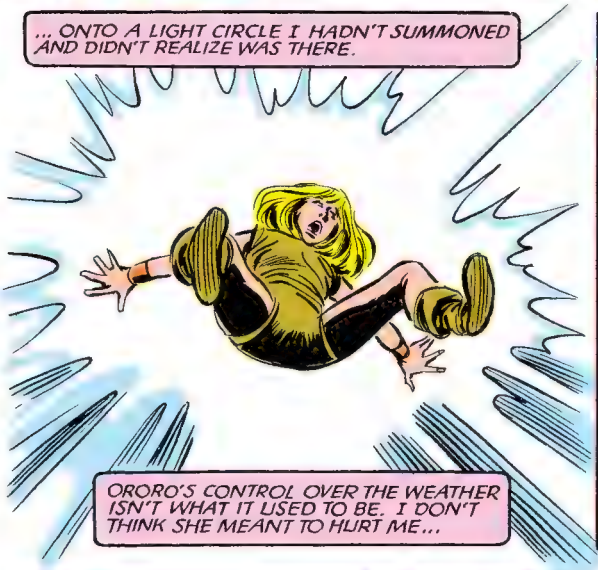
STEVIE, WHAT HAPPENED TO US?! WHERE ARE WE?!
DANI, SAM-- THAT'S ILLYANA!
IT CAN'T BE, BOBBY-- SHE'S TOO YOUNG!


AS SUDDENLY AS THEY APPEAR...
...THE AUTOMOBILE AND ITS OCCUPANTS VANISH.
WHO WERE THEY ?!?
I'VE NEVER SEEN THOSE PEOPLE BEFORE, YET THEY KNEW ME.*
*SEE NEW MUTANTS #14-- ON SALE RIGHT AFTER MAGIK #4 -- LOUISE.

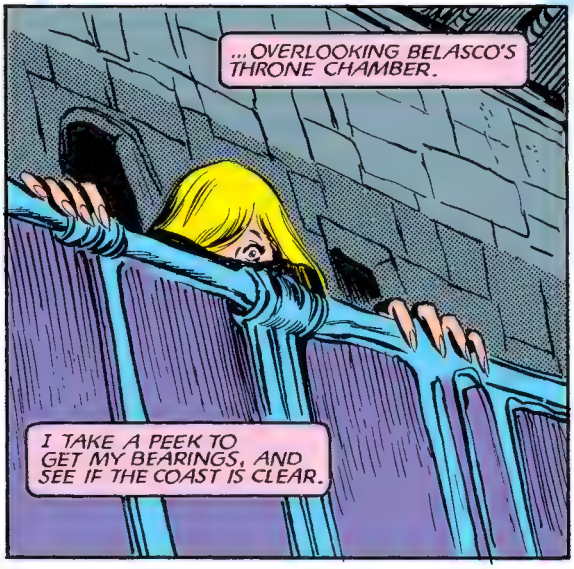
I CAN'T DELAY, MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO-- BELASCO KNOWS WHAT'LL POP UP NEXT! I'LL HAVE TO SUMMON ANOTHER DISK...
...AND CROSS MY FINGERS.

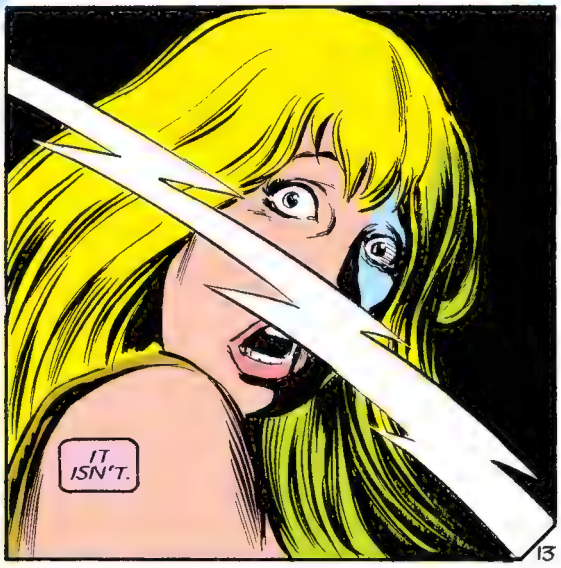

THE LIBRARY! I REACHED IT ON MY FIRST TRY-- I NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD BE SO EASY! Oh, I WISH MY BROTHER WAS HERE TO SEE, I BET HE'D BE SO PROUD!
AND THERE'S BELASCO'S GRIMOIRE!


STOP, ILLYANA!
A GUST OF WIND SHOVES ME BACK-WARDS...

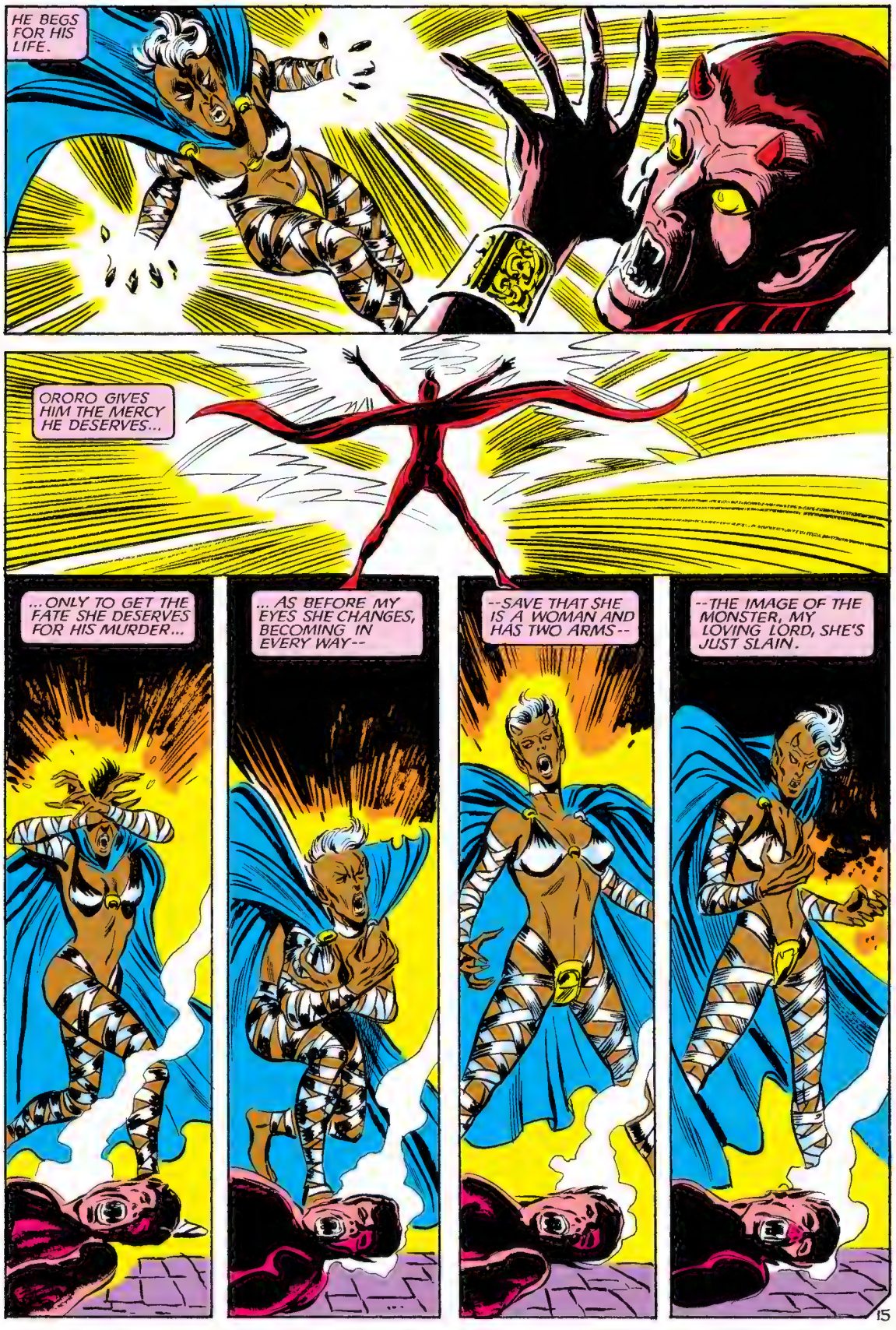

... ONTO A LIGHT CIRCLE I HADN'T SUMMONED AND DIDN'T REALIZE WAS THERE.
ORORO'S CONTROL OVER THE WEATHER ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE. I DON'T THINK SHE MEANT TO HURT ME...

... BUT HER WIND WAS SO STRONG, IT DID.
WHEN MY SENSES RETURN, I FIND MYSELF ON A GALLERY...

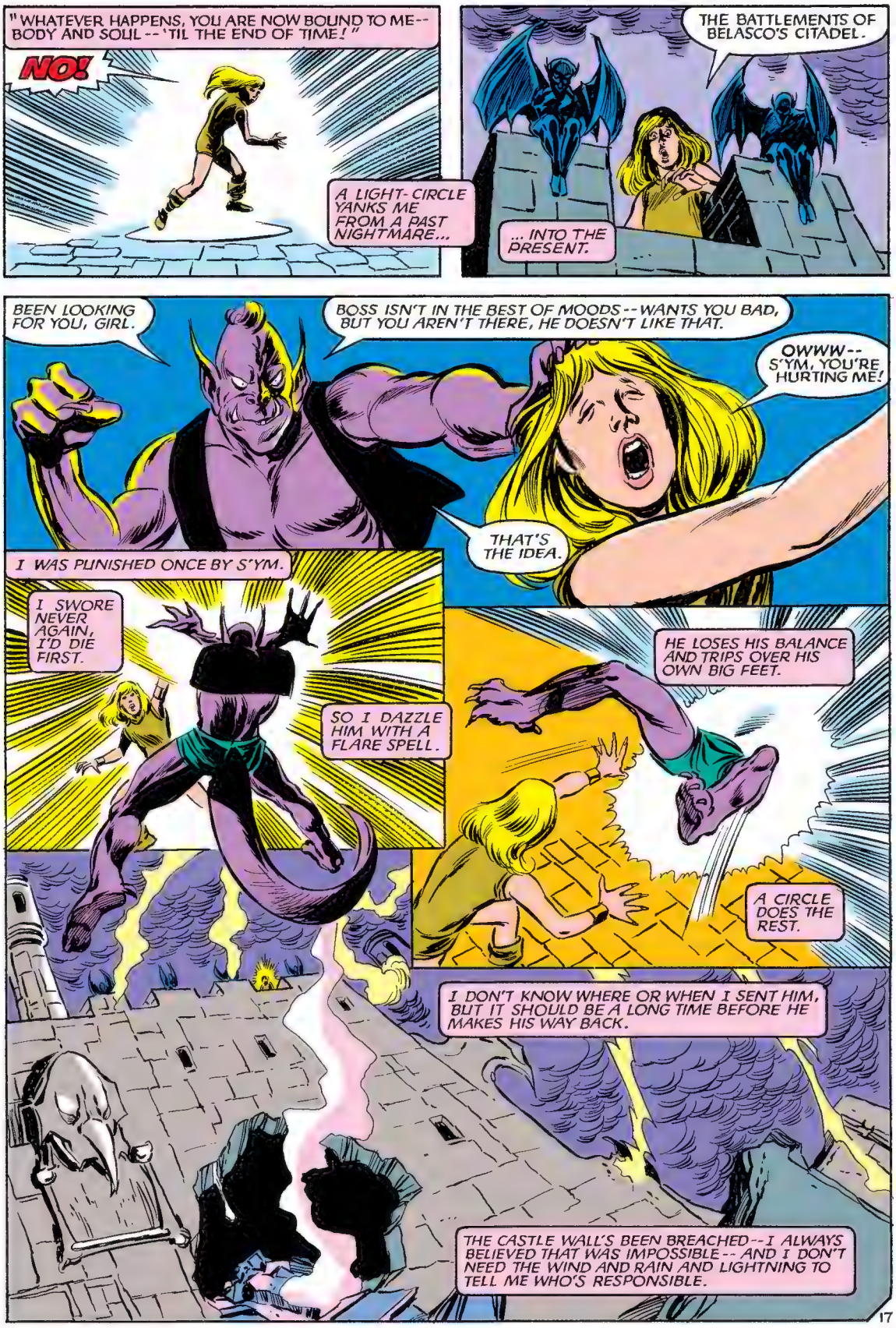

... OVERLOOKING BELASCO'S THRONE CHAMBER.
I TAKE A PEEK TO GET MY BEARINGS, AND SEE IF THE COAST IS CLEAR.

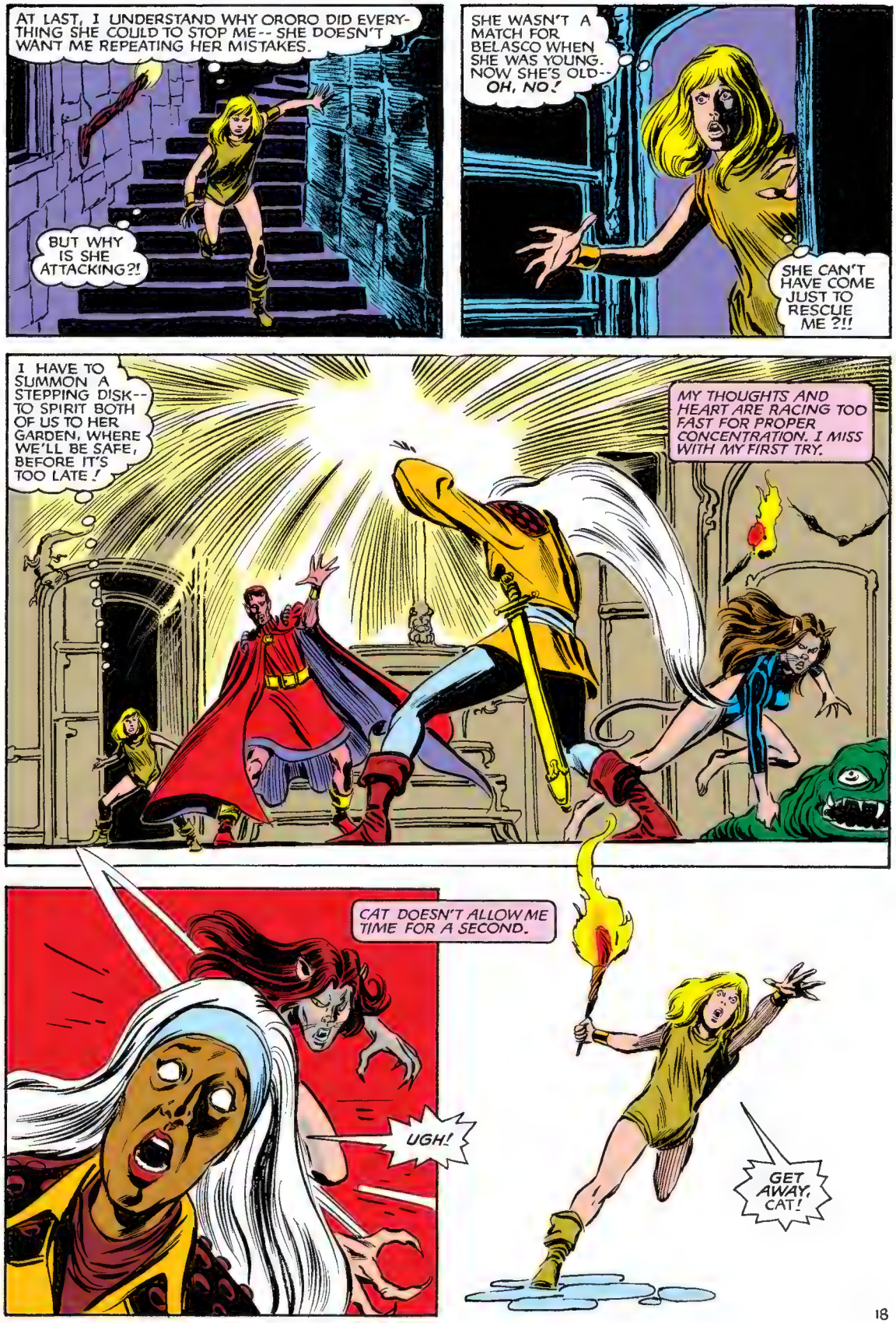

IT ISN'T.

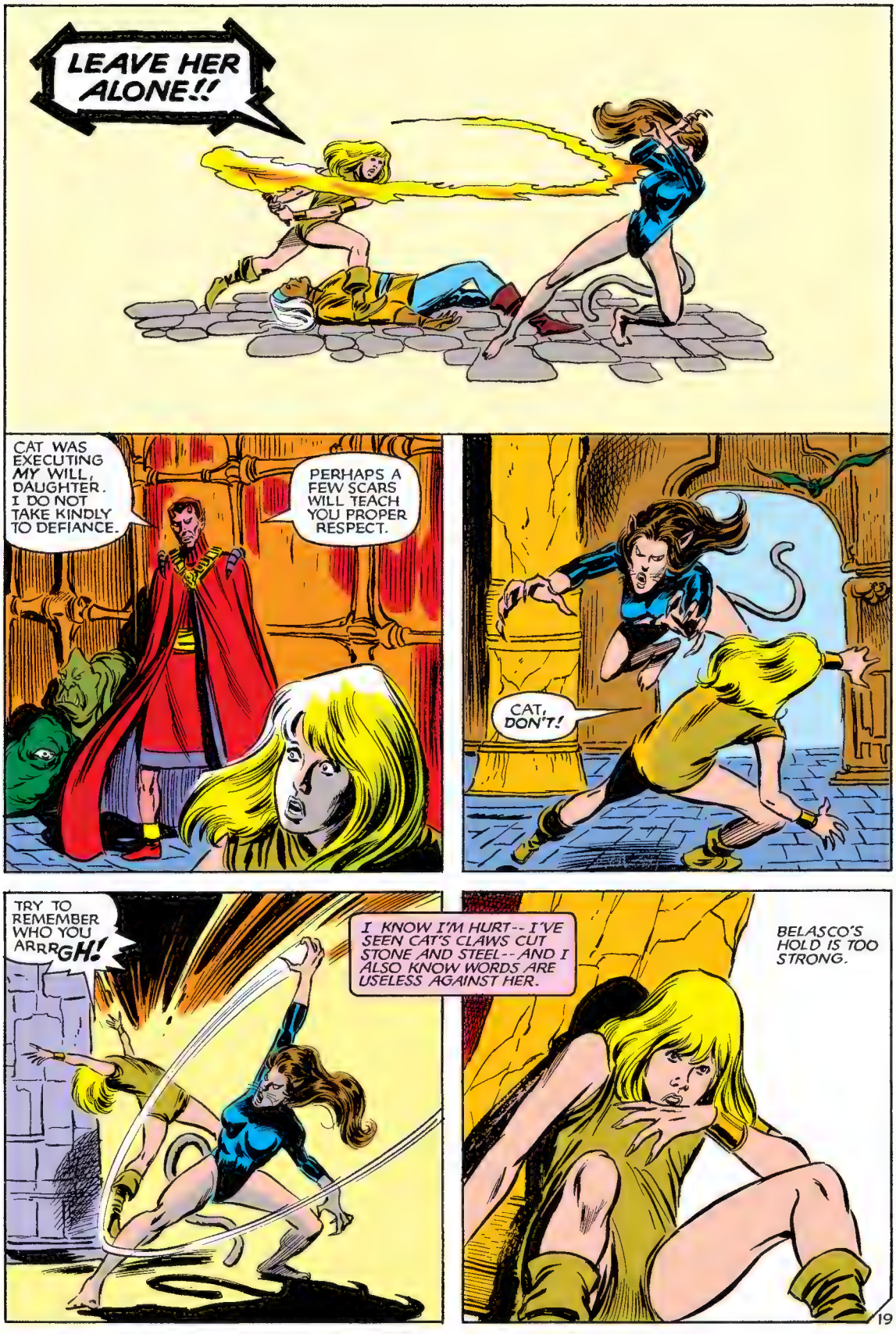
I'VE MOVED IN TIME AS WELL AS SPACE.
BELASCO LOOKS THE SAME AS EVER--
--BUT THIS STORM IS IN HER PRIME, AS MUTANT ELEMENTAL AND SORCERESS.
AGAINST HER, BELASCO SEEMS OBVIOUSLY OUTMATCHED.

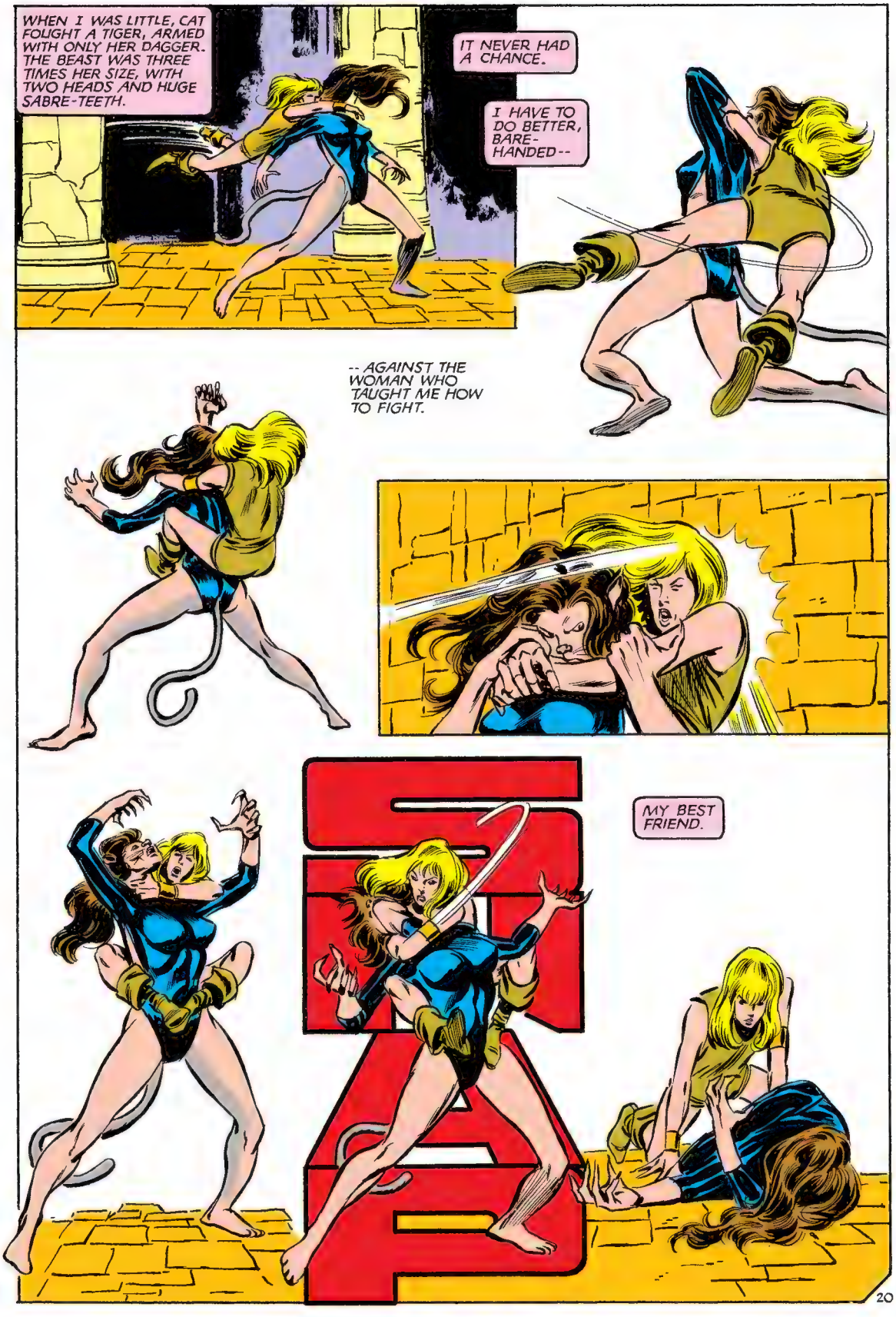

HE BEGS FOR HIS LIFE.
ORORO GIVES HIM THE MERCY HE DESERVES...
...ONLY TO GET THE FATE SHE DESERVES FOR HIS MURDER...
... AS BEFORE MY EYES SHE CHANGES, BECOMING IN EVERY WAY--
--SAVE THAT SHE IS A WOMAN AND HAS TWO ARMS--
--THE IMAGE OF THE MONSTER, MY LOVING LORD, SHE'S JUST SLAIN.

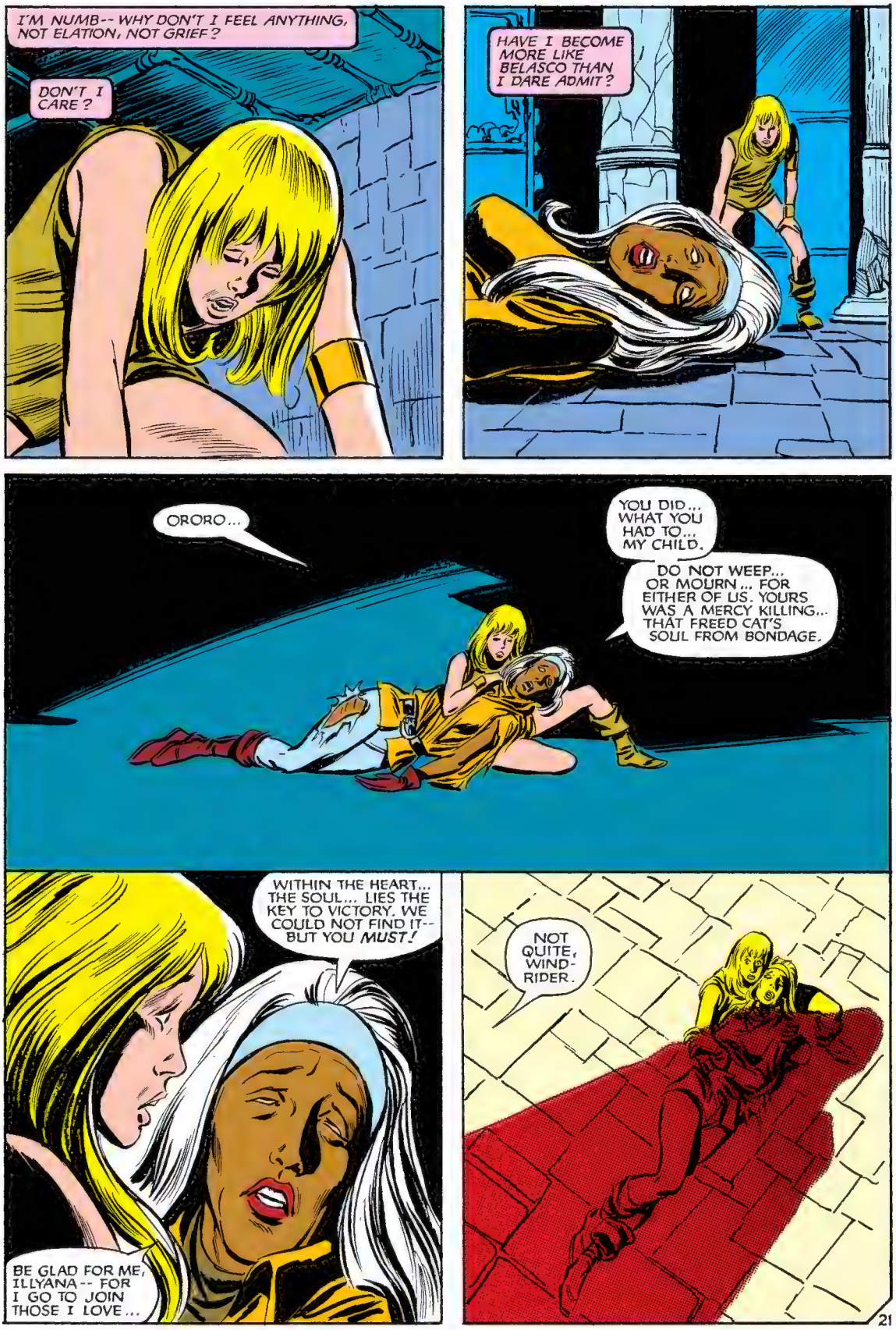
I WANT TO RUN AWAY. ORORO IS MY FRIEND. I CANNOT BEAR TO WATCH.
BUT I DO.
BECAUSE I SEE MYSELF STANDING IN HER PLACE.
THEN BEHIND ORORO A DARK FIGURE APPEARS...
DID YOU THINK ME SO EASILY SLAIN, ORORO?
YOU FORGET-- I AM MASTER OF LIMBO. WHATEVER EXISTS HERE DOES SO BY MY WILL AND AT MY SUFFERENCE.
THIS PLACE MAY BE MY PRISON, BUT WITHIN IT I AM IMMUNE FROM DEATH.
IT WAS NOT I WHO PERISHED UNDER THE FURY OF YOUR LIGHTNING, BUT THE LAST SHREDS OF YOUR CHERISHED INNOCENCE. YOUR FOE WAS HELPLESS, HE HAD SURRENDERED, YET STILL YOU STRUCK--
-- AND THEREBY BECAME TOTALLY, IRREVOCABLY CORRUPT. THE STRONGEST-WILLED, MOST NOBLE OF THE X-MEN -- IN HER RAGE AND HATE, HER LUST FOR BLOOD AND FOR REVENGE -- PROVED HERSELF NO BETTER THAN THE CREATURE SHE FOUGHT.


"WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU ARE NOW BOUND TO ME--BODY AND SOUL--'TIL THE END OF TIME!"
NO!
A LIGHT-CIRCLE YANKS ME FROM A PAST NIGHTMARE...
THE BATTLEMENTS OF BELASCO'S CITADEL.
...INTO THE PRESENT.
BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU, GIRL.
BOSS ISN'T IN THE BEST OF MOODS--WANTS YOU BAD, BUT YOU AREN'T THERE, HE DOESN'T LIKE THAT.
OWWW--S'YM, YOU'RE HURTING ME!
THAT'S THE IDEA.
I WAS PUNISHED ONCE BY S'YM.
I SWORE NEVER AGAIN, I'D DIE FIRST.
SO I DAZZLE HIM WITH A FLARE SPELL.
HE LOSES HIS BALANCE AND TRIPS OVER HIS OWN BIG FEET.
A CIRCLE DOES THE REST.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE OR WHEN I SENT HIM, BUT IT SHOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE HE MAKES HIS WAY BACK.
THE CASTLE WALL'S BEEN BREACHED--I ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE--AND I DON'T NEED THE WIND AND RAIN AND LIGHTNING TO TELL ME WHO'S RESPONSIBLE.


AT LAST, I UNDERSTAND WHY ORORO DID EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO STOP ME-- SHE DOESN'T WANT ME REPEATING HER MISTAKES.
BUT WHY IS SHE ATTACKING?!
SHE WASN'T A MATCH FOR BELASCO WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG. NOW SHE'S OLD-- OH, NO!
SHE CAN'T HAVE COME JUST TO RESCUE ME ?!!
I HAVE TO SUMMON A STEPPING DISK-- TO SPIRIT BOTH OF US TO HER GARDEN, WHERE WE'LL BE SAFE, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
MY THOUGHTS AND HEART ARE RACING TOO FAST FOR PROPER CONCENTRATION. I MISS WITH MY FIRST TRY.
CAT DOESN'T ALLOW ME TIME FOR A SECOND.
UGH!
GET AWAY, CAT!


LEAVE HER ALONE!!
CAT WAS EXECUTING MY WILL, DAUGHTER. I DO NOT TAKE KINDLY TO DEFIANCE.
PERHAPS A FEW SCARS WILL TEACH YOU PROPER RESPECT.
CAT, DON'T!
TRY TO REMEMBER WHO YOU ARRRGH!
I KNOW I'M HURT-- I'VE SEEN CAT'S CLAWS CUT STONE AND STEEL-- AND I ALSO KNOW WORDS ARE USELESS AGAINST HER.
BELASCO'S HOLD IS TOO STRONG.


WHEN I WAS LITTLE, CAT FOUGHT A TIGER, ARMED WITH ONLY HER DAGGER. THE BEAST WAS THREE TIMES HER SIZE, WITH TWO HEADS AND HUGE SABRE-TEETH.
IT NEVER HAD A CHANCE.
I HAVE TO DO BETTER, BARE-HANDED--
-- AGAINST THE WOMAN WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO FIGHT.
MY BEST FRIEND.


I'M NUMB-- WHY DON'T I FEEL ANYTHING, NOT ELATION, NOT GRIEF?
DON'T I CARE?
HAVE I BECOME MORE LIKE BELASCO THAN I DARE ADMIT?
ORORO...
YOU DID... WHAT YOU HAD TO... MY CHILD.
DO NOT WEEP... OR MOURN... FOR EITHER OF US. YOURS WAS A MERCY KILLING... THAT FREED CAT'S SOUL FROM BONDAGE.
WITHIN THE HEART... THE SOUL... LIES THE KEY TO VICTORY. WE COULD NOT FIND IT-- BUT YOU MUST!
BE GLAD FOR ME, ILLYANA-- FOR I GO TO JOIN THOSE I LOVE...
NOT QUITE, WIND-RIDER.

YOU PUT SO MUCH FAITH IN ILLYANA. IT'S REALLY QUITE TOUCHING.
I CANNOT LET YOU GO WITHOUT DEMONSTRATING -- BEYOND ALL SHADOW OF A DOUBT -- HOW FLAWED AND CORRUPT A VESSAL SHE HAS BECOME UNDER MY TUTELEGE.
YOU WERE A SUPERB PUPIL, ORORO -- IN MANY WAYS, MY EQUAL -- BUT MY DARKCHILD FAR OUTSTRIPS YOU.
BEHOLD!
MY BREAST BURNS...
...ELDRITCH FIRE CONSUMING CLOTHES BUT NOT SKIN...
...AS BELASCO'S SPELL REVEALS MY MEDALLION.
TWO OF ITS FIVE BLOODSTONES ARE IN PLACE.
WHEN ITS CIRCLE IS COMPLETE, I WILL BECOME THE GATE THROUGH WHICH BELASCO'S DREAD MASTERS WILL ENTER OUR UNIVERSE.
LONG AGO, I CLAIMED YOUR SOUL, ORORO -- BUT I UNDERESTIMATED YOU. YOU STOLE IT BACK FROM ME.
YOU COULD NEVER AGAIN BE THE WOMAN YOU WERE -- FOR INNOCENCE CANNOT BE REGAINED -- BUT THE GOOD IN YOU CAME TO BALANCE AND EVENTUALLY OUTWEIGH THE EVIL.
OF ALL THOSE MY POWER HAS TOUCHED AND TAINTED, OF THOSE WHO I MADE MY DISCIPLES, ONLY YOU EVER BROKE THAT HOLD. SUCH A FEAT IS WORTHY OF REWARD.
FIRST, ILLYANA, YOU AND I WILL CONJURE THE THIRD BLOODSTONE.

THEN, ORORO, WE WILL STRIP YOUR SOUL FROM YOUR BODY WHILE YOU STILL LIVE--
--AND OFFER IT TO THOSE I SERVE, THE DARK ONES, AS A SACRIFICE!
DEATH WILL NOT HERALD YOUR FREEDOM, HARLOT--
-- BUT YOUR ETERNAL DAMNATION!!
TO BE CONCLUDED

MARVEL
FROM THE X-MEN
STORM™ AND ILLYANA™
MAGIK
#4 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
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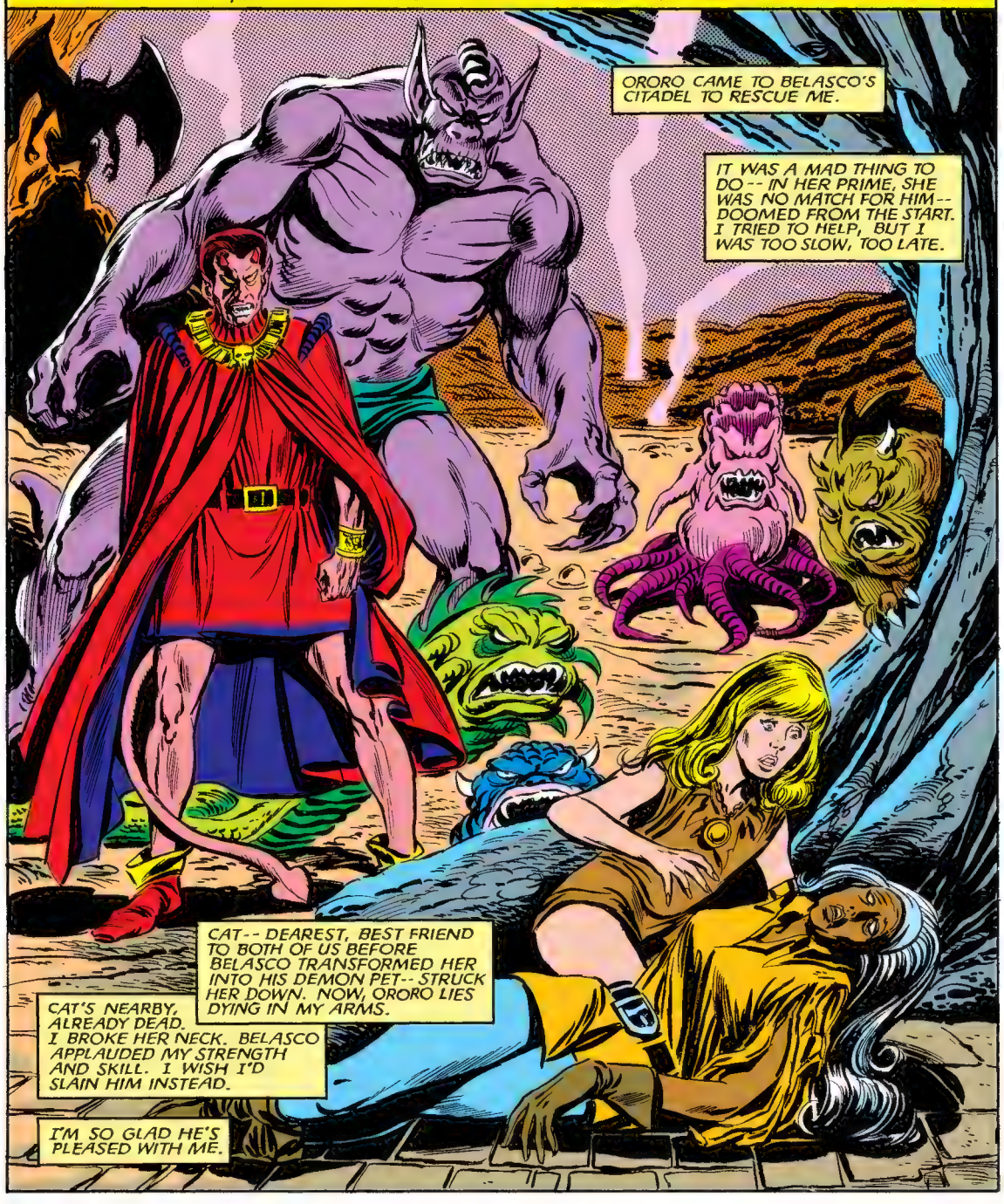
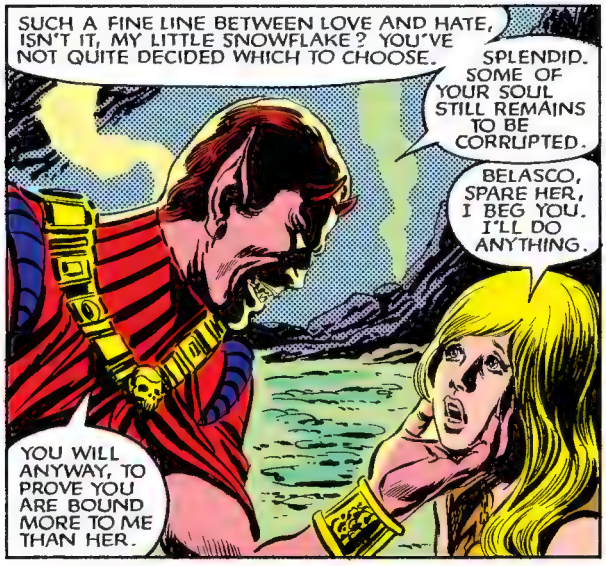
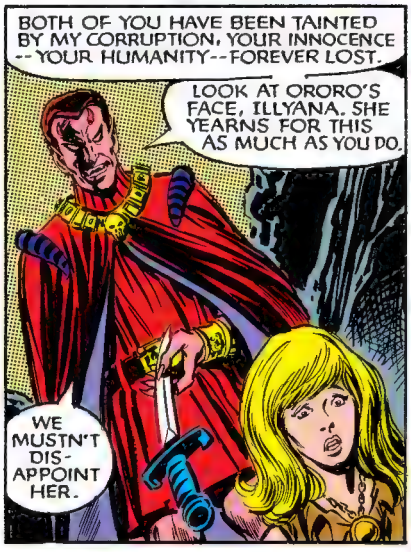
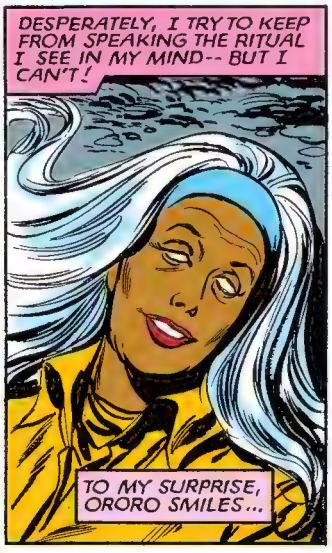

ORORO CAME TO BELASCO'S CITADEL TO RESCUE ME.
IT WAS A MAD THING TO DO -- IN HER PRIME, SHE WAS NO MATCH FOR HIM -- DOOMED FROM THE START. I TRIED TO HELP, BUT I WAS TOO SLOW, TOO LATE.
CAT -- DEAREST, BEST FRIEND TO BOTH OF US BEFORE BELASCO TRANSFORMED HER INTO HIS DEMON PET -- STRUCK HER DOWN. NOW, ORORO LIES DYING IN MY ARMS.
CAT'S NEARBY, ALREADY DEAD. I BROKE HER NECK. BELASCO APPLAUDED MY STRENGTH AND SKILL. I WISH I'D SLAIN HIM INSTEAD.
I'M SO GLAD HE'S PLEASED WITH ME.


SUCH A FINE LINE BETWEEN LOVE AND HATE, ISN'T IT, MY LITTLE SNOWFLAKE? YOU'VE NOT QUITE DECIDED WHICH TO CHOOSE.
SPLENDID. SOME OF YOUR SOUL STILL REMAINS TO BE CORRUPTED.
BELASCO, SPARE HER, I BEG YOU. I'LL DO ANYTHING.
YOU WILL ANYWAY, TO PROVE YOU ARE BOUND MORE TO ME THAN HER.

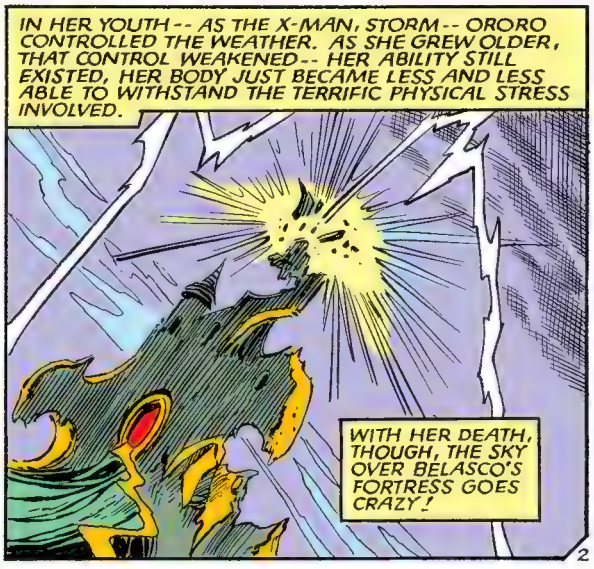
FIRST, ILLYANA, WE WILL CONJURE THE THIRD BLOODSTONE FOR YOUR MEDALLION -- AND THEN USE ITS POWER TO STRIP ORORO'S SOUL FROM HER WHILE SHE YET LIVES...
...TO OFFER IT IN SACRIFICE TO MY DREAD MASTERS, THE DARK ONES!
YOU LIKE THAT, DON'T YOU?
YES.

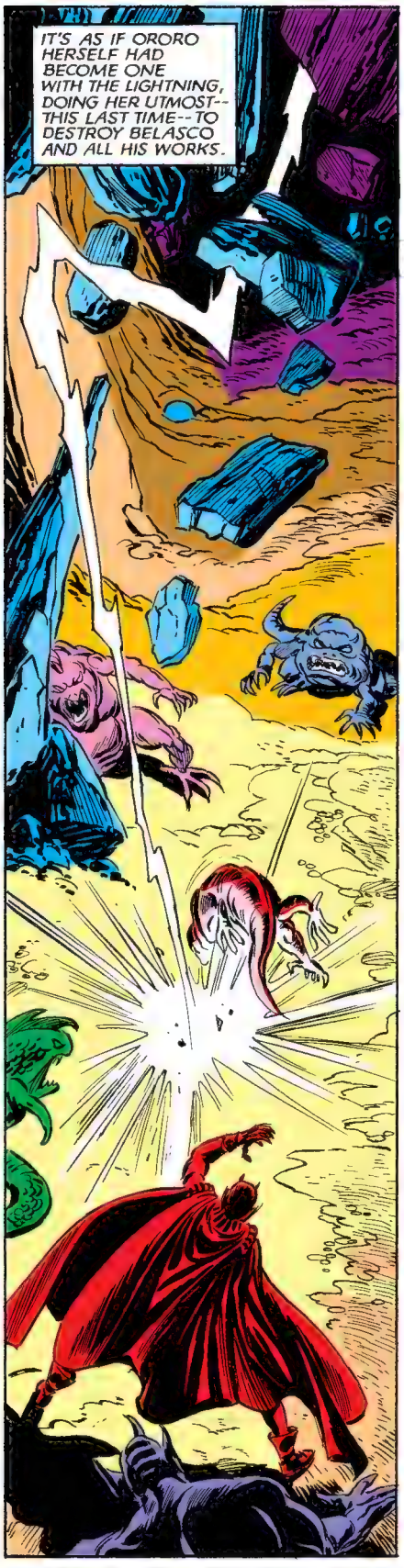

BOTH OF YOU HAVE BEEN TAINTED BY MY CORRUPTION, YOUR INNOCENCE -- YOUR HUMANITY -- FOREVER LOST.
LOOK AT ORORO'S FACE, ILLYANA. SHE YEARNS FOR THIS AS MUCH AS YOU DO.
WE MUSTN'T DISAPPOINT HER.

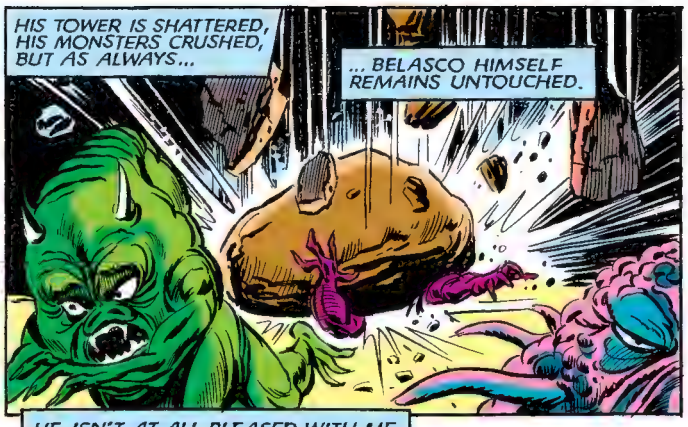

DESPERATELY, I TRY TO KEEP FROM SPEAKING THE RITUAL I SEE IN MY MIND -- BUT I CAN'T!
TO MY SURPRISE, ORORO SMILES...

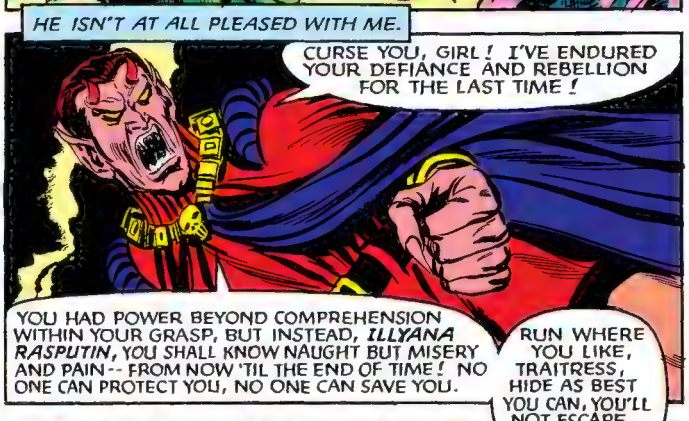
... AND IN THAT SMILE, THE UNDERSTANDING IN HER EYES, I FIND THE STRENGTH I NEED.
FORGIVE ME. I WISH THERE WAS SOME OTHER WAY.

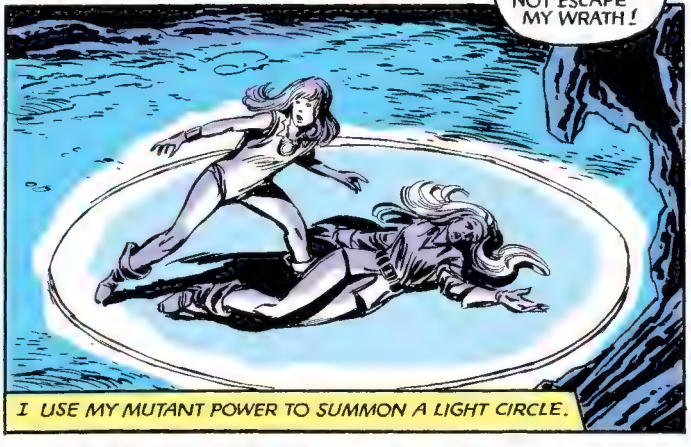
I DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
NO!

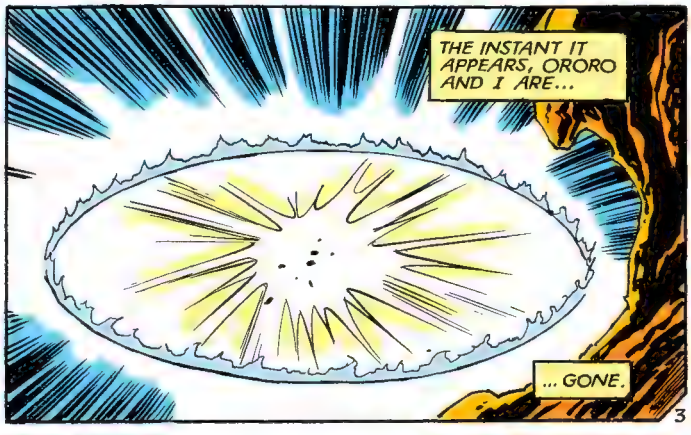

IN HER YOUTH -- AS THE X-MAN, STORM -- ORORO CONTROLLED THE WEATHER. AS SHE GREW OLDER, THAT CONTROL WEAKENED -- HER ABILITY STILL EXISTED, HER BODY JUST BECAME LESS AND LESS ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE TERRIFIC PHYSICAL STRESS INVOLVED.
WITH HER DEATH, THOUGH, THE SKY OVER BELASCO'S FORTRESS GOES CRAZY!

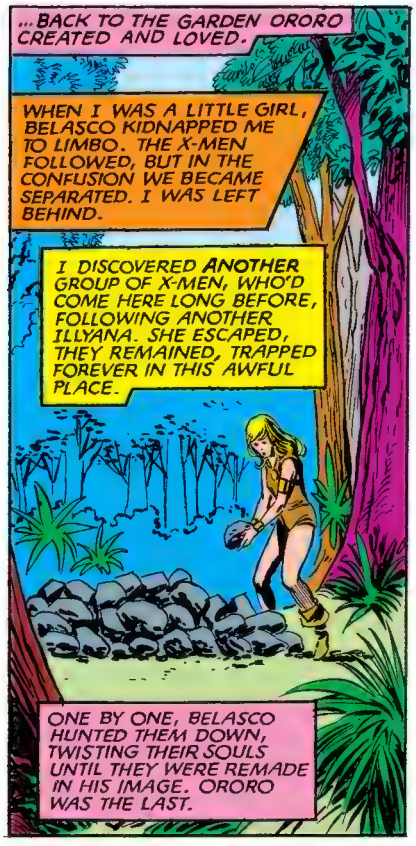

IT'S AS IF ORORO HERSELF HAD BECOME ONE WITH THE LIGHTNING, DOING HER UTMOST--THIS LAST TIME--TO DESTROY BELASCO AND ALL HIS WORKS.


HIS TOWER IS SHATTERED, HIS MONSTERS CRUSHED, BUT AS ALWAYS...
... BELASCO HIMSELF REMAINS UNTOUCHED.

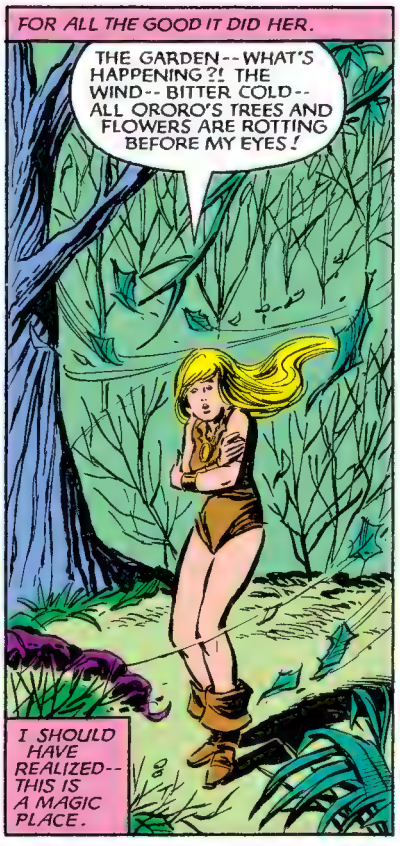

HE ISN'T AT ALL PLEASED WITH ME.
CURSE YOU, GIRL! I'VE ENDURED YOUR DEFIANCE AND REBELLION FOR THE LAST TIME!
YOU HAD POWER BEYOND COMPREHENSION WITHIN YOUR GRASP, BUT INSTEAD, ILLYANA RASPUTIN, YOU SHALL KNOW NAUGHT BUT MISERY AND PAIN--FROM NOW 'TIL THE END OF TIME! NO ONE CAN PROTECT YOU, NO ONE CAN SAVE YOU.
RUN WHERE YOU LIKE, TRAITRESS, HIDE AS BEST YOU CAN, YOU'LL NOT ESCAPE MY WRATH!

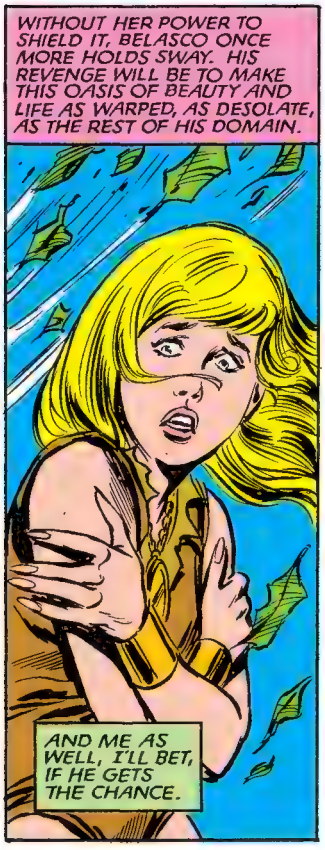

I USE MY MUTANT POWER TO SUMMON A LIGHT CIRCLE.


THE INSTANT IT APPEARS, ORORO AND I ARE...
... GONE.

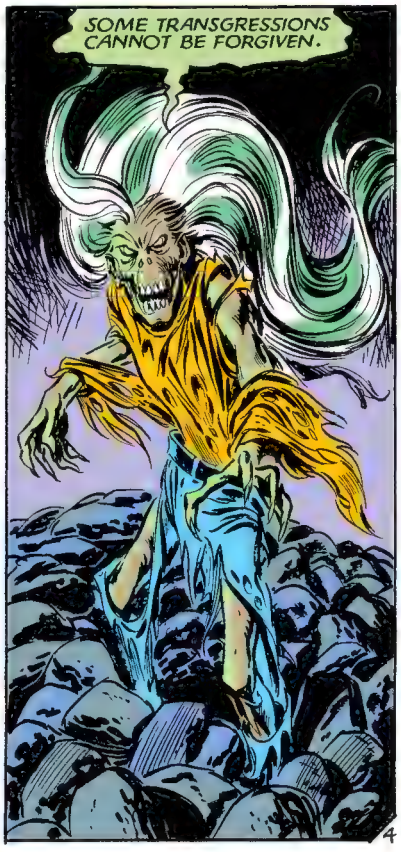

...BACK TO THE GARDEN ORORO CREATED AND LOVED.
WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, BELASCO KIDNAPPED ME TO LIMBO. THE X-MEN FOLLOWED, BUT IN THE CONFUSION WE BECAME SEPARATED. I WAS LEFT BEHIND.
I DISCOVERED ANOTHER GROUP OF X-MEN, WHO'D COME HERE LONG BEFORE, FOLLOWING ANOTHER ILLYANA. SHE ESCAPED, THEY REMAINED, TRAPPED FOREVER IN THIS AWFUL PLACE.
ONE BY ONE, BELASCO HUNTED THEM DOWN, TWISTING THEIR SOULS UNTIL THEY WERE REMADE IN HIS IMAGE. ORORO WAS THE LAST.

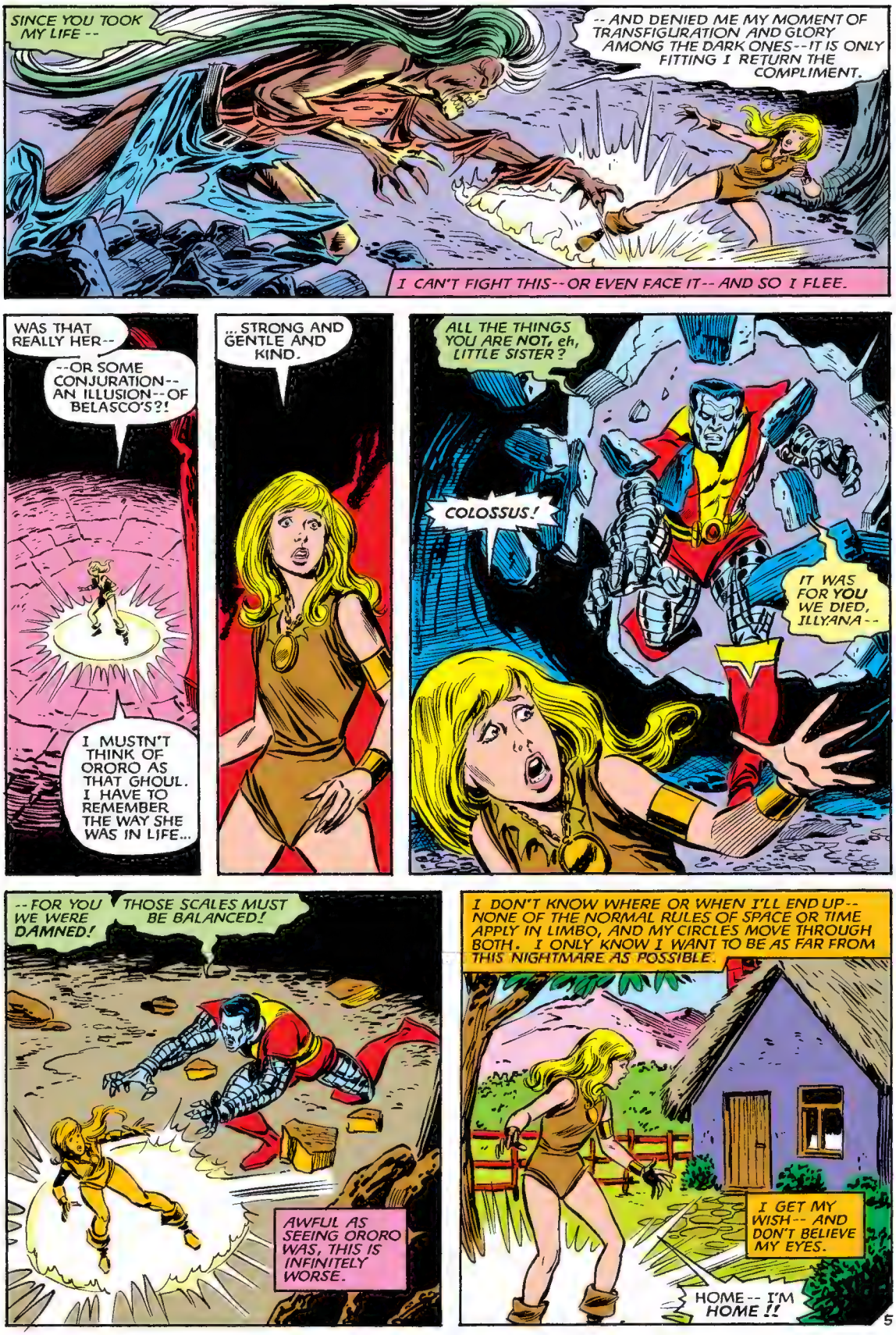
HE POSSESSED HER UTTERLY ONCE, BUT SHE OUTWITTED HIM. SHE STOLE BACK HER SOUL AND WON HER FREEDOM, BECOMING HIS GREATEST ENEMY.

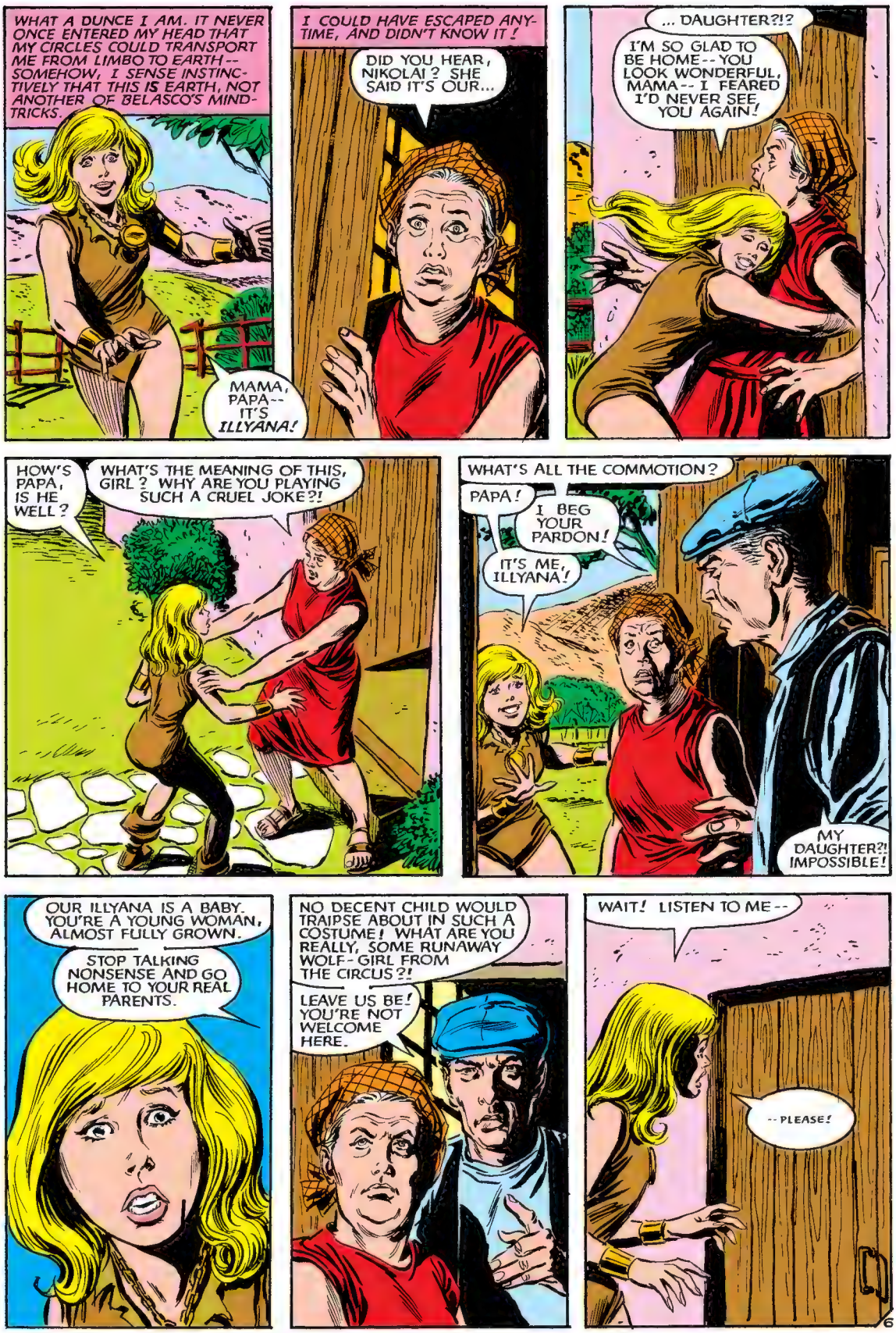

FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DID HER.
THE GARDEN--WHAT'S HAPPENING?! THE WIND-- BITTER COLD-- ALL ORORO'S TREES AND FLOWERS ARE ROTTING BEFORE MY EYES!
I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED-- THIS IS A MAGIC PLACE.

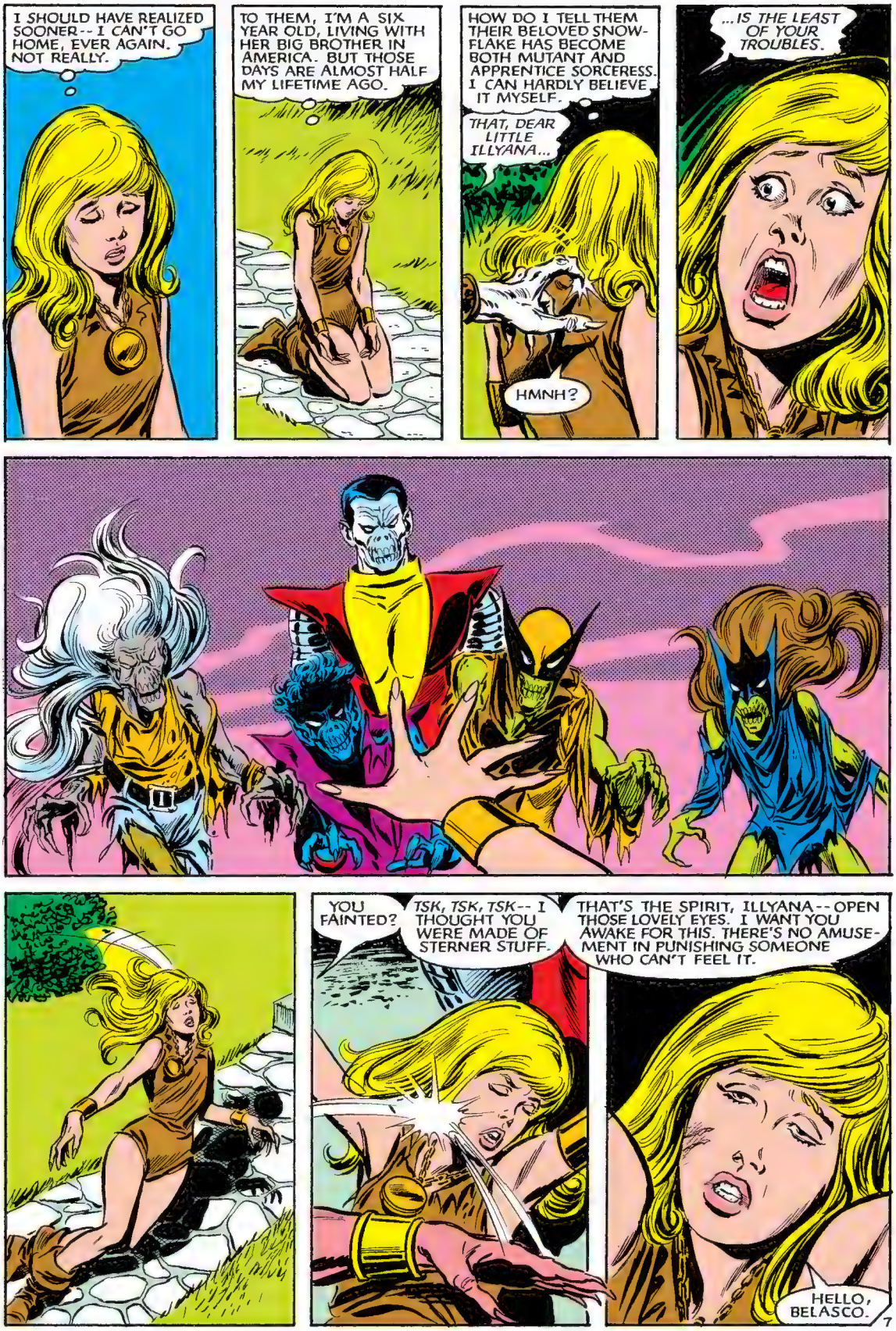

WITHOUT HER POWER TO SHIELD IT, BELASCO ONCE MORE HOLDS SWAY. HIS REVENGE WILL BE TO MAKE THIS OASIS OF BEAUTY AND LIFE AS WARPED, AS DESOLATE, AS THE REST OF HIS DOMAIN.
AND ME AS WELL, I'LL BET, IF HE GETS THE CHANCE.

AS I THINK THAT, I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO RUN TO HIM, TO BEG HIS FORGIVENESS-- READY TO PAY ANY PRICE IF ONLY HE'D TAKE ME BACK AND LOVE ME AS BEFORE.
I FEEL SO ALONE. SO AFRAID.
YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT SOONER, DISCIPLE.

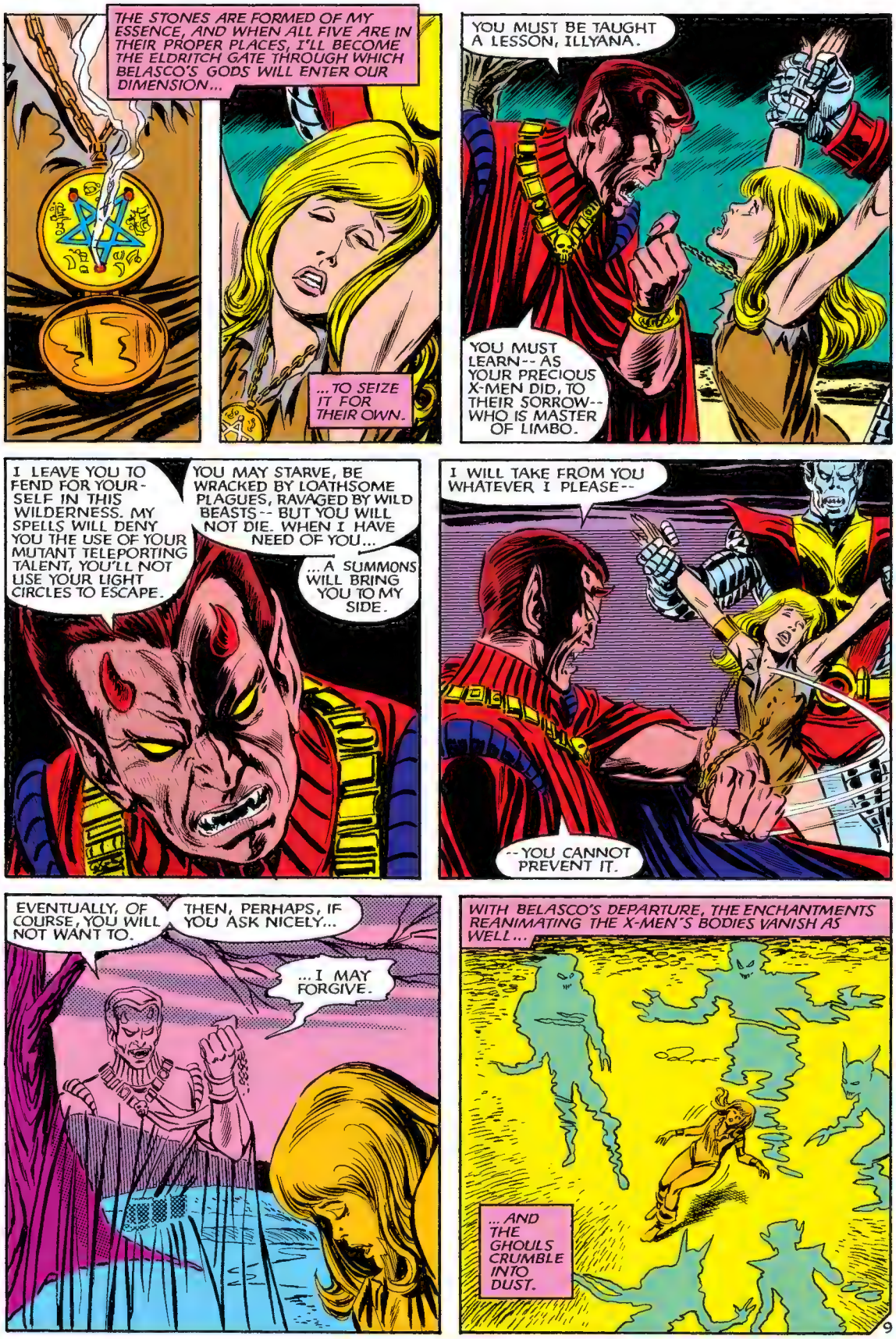

SOME TRANSGRESSIONS CANNOT BE FORGIVEN.

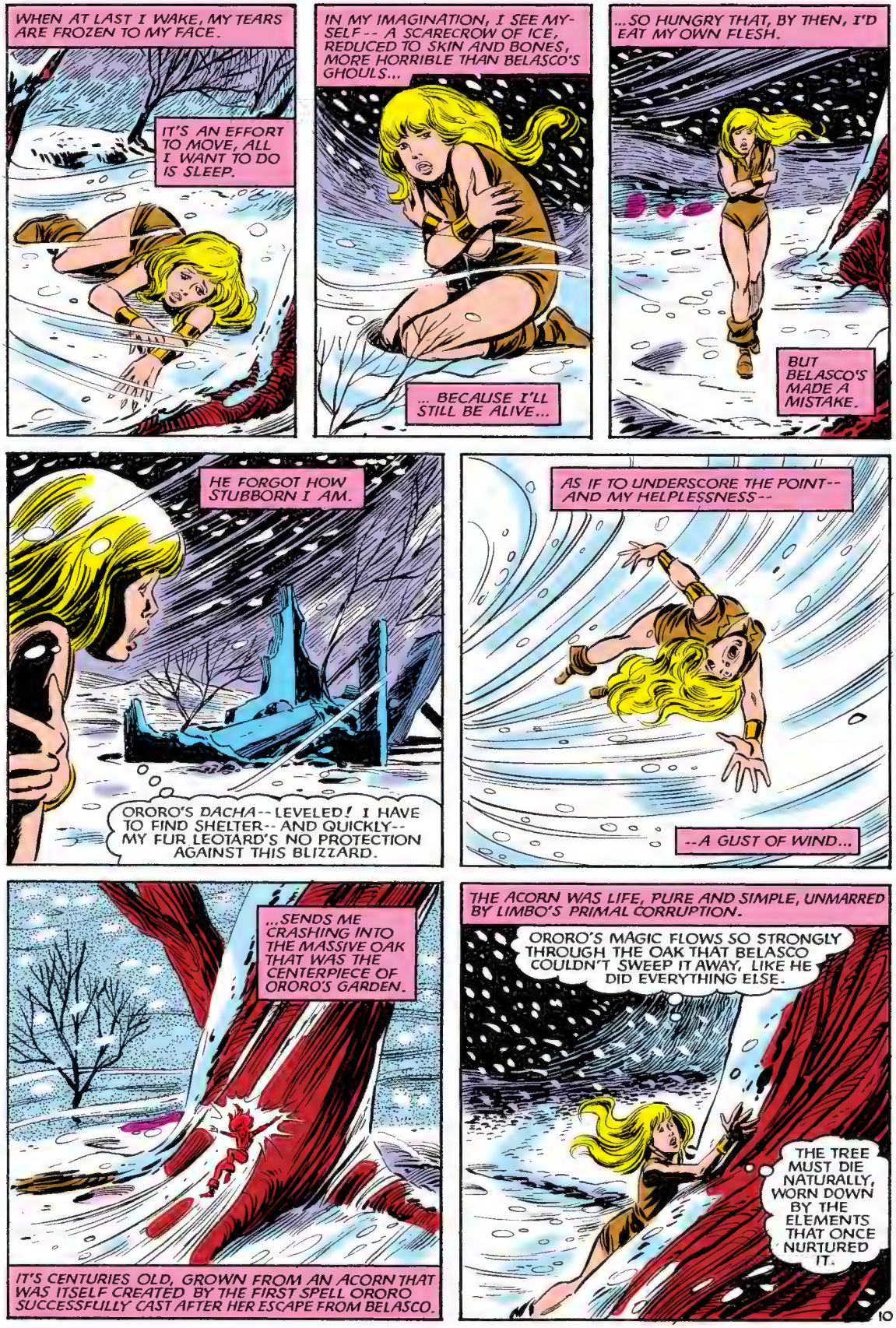

SINCE YOU TOOK MY LIFE --
-- AND DENIED ME MY MOMENT OF TRANSFIGURATION AND GLORY AMONG THE DARK ONES--IT IS ONLY FITTING I RETURN THE COMPLIMENT.
I CAN'T FIGHT THIS--OR EVEN FACE IT-- AND SO I FLEE.
WAS THAT REALLY HER--
--OR SOME CONJURATION-- AN ILLUSION--OF BELASCO'S?!
I MUSTN'T THINK OF ORORO AS THAT GHOUL. I HAVE TO REMEMBER THE WAY SHE WAS IN LIFE...
...STRONG AND GENTLE AND KIND.
ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE NOT, eh, LITTLE SISTER?
COLOSSUS!
IT WAS FOR YOU WE DIED, ILLYANA--
--FOR YOU WE WERE DAMNED!
THOSE SCALES MUST BE BALANCED!
AWFUL AS SEEING ORORO WAS, THIS IS INFINITELY WORSE.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE OR WHEN I'LL END UP-- NONE OF THE NORMAL RULES OF SPACE OR TIME APPLY IN LIMBO, AND MY CIRCLES MOVE THROUGH BOTH. I ONLY KNOW I WANT TO BE AS FAR FROM THIS NIGHTMARE AS POSSIBLE.
I GET MY WISH-- AND DON'T BELIEVE MY EYES.
HOME-- I'M HOME !!

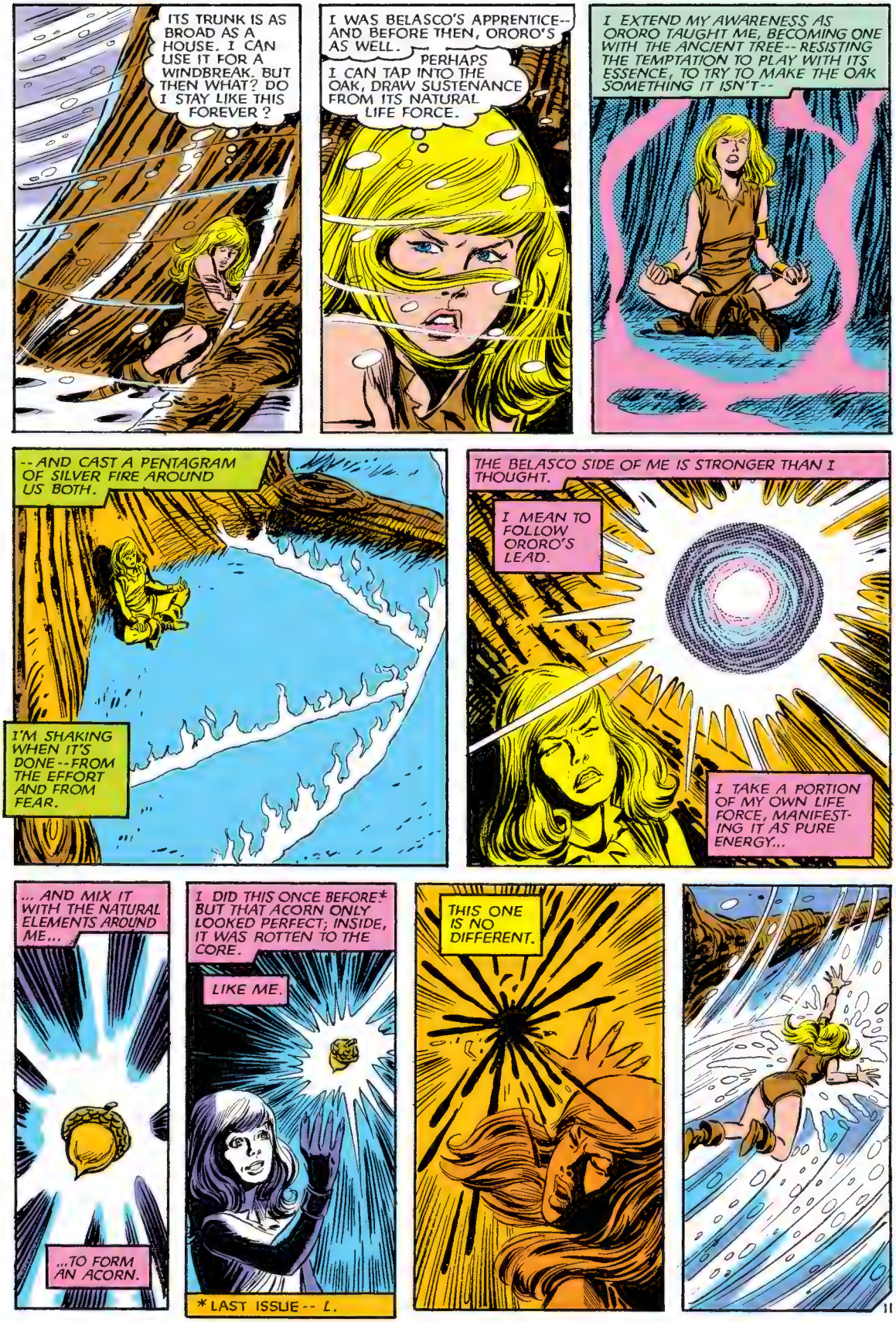

WHAT A DUNCE I AM. IT NEVER ONCE ENTERED MY HEAD THAT MY CIRCLES COULD TRANSPORT ME FROM LIMBO TO EARTH -- SOMEHOW, I SENSE INSTINCTIVELY THAT THIS IS EARTH, NOT ANOTHER OF BELASCO'S MIND-TRICKS.
MAMA, PAPA -- IT'S ILLYANA!
I COULD HAVE ESCAPED ANYTIME, AND DIDN'T KNOW IT!
DID YOU HEAR, NIKOLAI? SHE SAID IT'S OUR...
... DAUGHTER?!?
I'M SO GLAD TO BE HOME -- YOU LOOK WONDERFUL, MAMA -- I FEARED I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN!
HOW'S PAPA, IS HE WELL?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, GIRL? WHY ARE YOU PLAYING SUCH A CRUEL JOKE?!
WHAT'S ALL THE COMMOTION?
PAPA!
I BEG YOUR PARDON!
IT'S ME, ILLYANA!
MY DAUGHTER?! IMPOSSIBLE!
OUR ILLYANA IS A BABY. YOU'RE A YOUNG WOMAN, ALMOST FULLY GROWN.
STOP TALKING NONSENSE AND GO HOME TO YOUR REAL PARENTS.
NO DECENT CHILD WOULD TRAIPSE ABOUT IN SUCH A COSTUME! WHAT ARE YOU REALLY, SOME RUNAWAY WOLF-GIRL FROM THE CIRCUS?!
LEAVE US BE! YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE.
WAIT! LISTEN TO ME --
-- PLEASE!

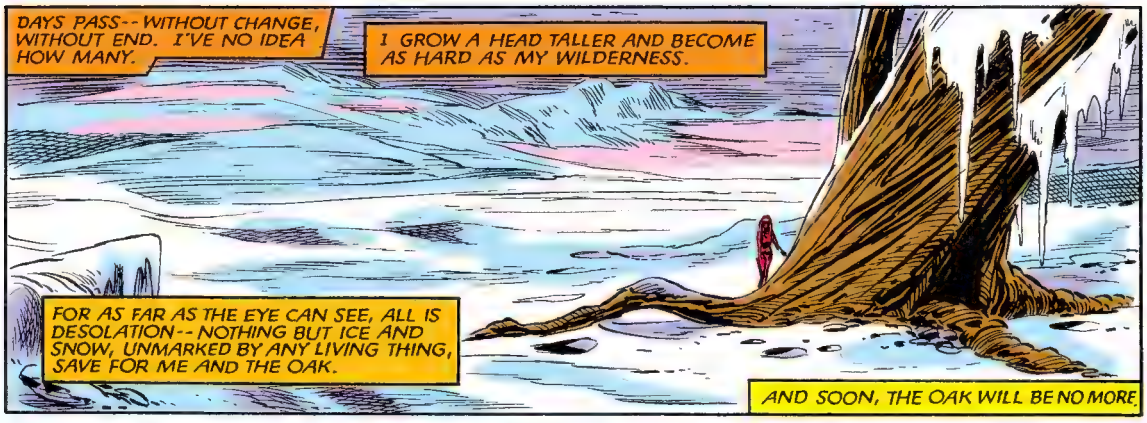

I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED SOONER -- I CAN'T GO HOME, EVER AGAIN. NOT REALLY.
TO THEM, I'M A SIX YEAR OLD, LIVING WITH HER BIG BROTHER IN AMERICA. BUT THOSE DAYS ARE ALMOST HALF MY LIFETIME AGO.
HOW DO I TELL THEM THEIR BELOVED SNOWFLAKE HAS BECOME BOTH MUTANT AND APPRENTICE SORCERESS. I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT MYSELF.
THAT, DEAR LITTLE ILLYANA...
HMNH?
...IS THE LEAST OF YOUR TROUBLES.
YOU FAINTED?
TSK, TSK, TSK -- I THOUGHT YOU WERE MADE OF STERNER STUFF.
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, ILLYANA -- OPEN THOSE LOVELY EYES. I WANT YOU AWAKE FOR THIS. THERE'S NO AMUSEMENT IN PUNISHING SOMEONE WHO CAN'T FEEL IT.
HELLO, BELASCO.

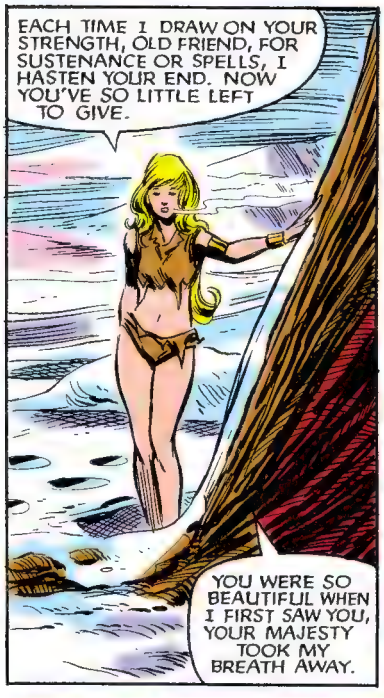
YOU'RE FAR TOO CALM, CONSIDERING WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU.
COLOSSUS, STRETCH YOUR SISTER'S ARMS A BIT. I WANT TO HEAR HER SCREAM.
I DO, UNTIL MY THROAT CRACKS.
BELASCO LOVES EVERY MINUTE.
THIS MOMENT COULD HAVE BEEN AS PLEASURABLE FOR YOU AS FOR ME, ILLYANA.
I THOUGHT I HURT BEFORE-- BELASCO TEACHES ME I DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD.
I WANT TO FIGHT. AND I WANT JUST AS MUCH TO GIVE IN.
THERE'S A PART OF ME THAT WILL ALWAYS ANSWER HIS CALL...
...THAT WANTS THE DEMONIC POWER HE OFFERS.
WITH EACH BLOODSTONE CEREMONY, THAT PART GROWS.

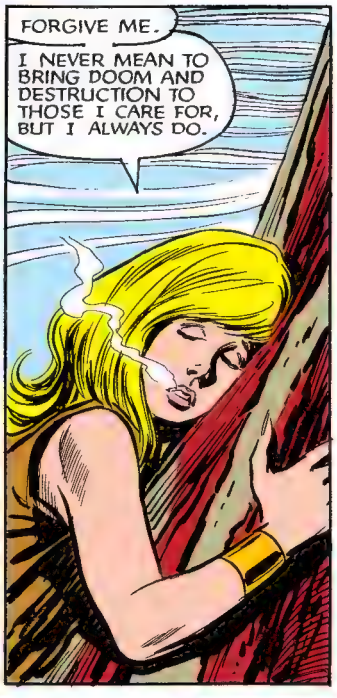

THE STONES ARE FORMED OF MY ESSENCE, AND WHEN ALL FIVE ARE IN THEIR PROPER PLACES, I'LL BECOME THE ELDRITCH GATE THROUGH WHICH BELASCO'S GODS WILL ENTER OUR DIMENSION...
...TO SEIZE IT FOR THEIR OWN.
YOU MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON, ILLYANA.
YOU MUST LEARN-- AS YOUR PRECIOUS X-MEN DID, TO THEIR SORROW-- WHO IS MASTER OF LIMBO.
I LEAVE YOU TO FEND FOR YOURSELF IN THIS WILDERNESS. MY SPELLS WILL DENY YOU THE USE OF YOUR MUTANT TELEPORTING TALENT, YOU'LL NOT USE YOUR LIGHT CIRCLES TO ESCAPE.
YOU MAY STARVE, BE WRACKED BY LOATHSOME PLAGUES, RAVAGED BY WILD BEASTS-- BUT YOU WILL NOT DIE. WHEN I HAVE NEED OF YOU...
...A SUMMONS WILL BRING YOU TO MY SIDE.
I WILL TAKE FROM YOU WHATEVER I PLEASE--
--YOU CANNOT PREVENT IT.
EVENTUALLY, OF COURSE, YOU WILL NOT WANT TO.
THEN, PERHAPS, IF YOU ASK NICELY...
...I MAY FORGIVE.
WITH BELASCO'S DEPARTURE, THE ENCHANTMENTS REANIMATING THE X-MEN'S BODIES VANISH AS WELL...
...AND THE GHOULS CRUMBLE INTO DUST.

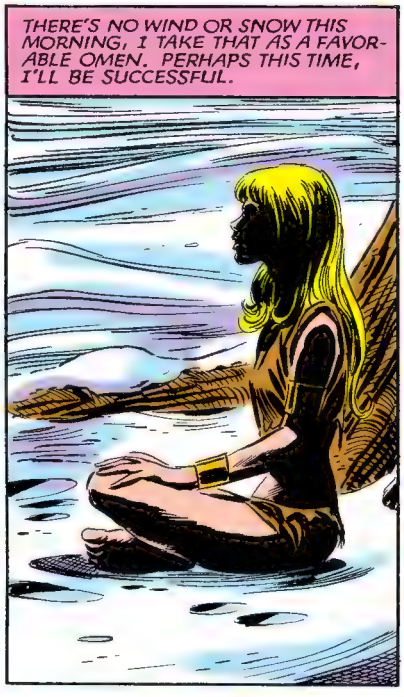

WHEN AT LAST I WAKE, MY TEARS ARE FROZEN TO MY FACE.
IT'S AN EFFORT TO MOVE, ALL I WANT TO DO IS SLEEP.
IN MY IMAGINATION, I SEE MYSELF -- A SCARECROW OF ICE, REDUCED TO SKIN AND BONES, MORE HORRIBLE THAN BELASCO'S GHOULS...
... BECAUSE I'LL STILL BE ALIVE...
...SO HUNGRY THAT, BY THEN, I'D EAT MY OWN FLESH.
BUT BELASCO'S MADE A MISTAKE.
HE FORGOT HOW STUBBORN I AM.
ORORO'S DACHA -- LEVELED! I HAVE TO FIND SHELTER -- AND QUICKLY -- MY FUR LEOTARD'S NO PROTECTION AGAINST THIS BLIZZARD.
AS IF TO UNDERSCORE THE POINT -- AND MY HELPLESSNESS --
--A GUST OF WIND...
...SENDS ME CRASHING INTO THE MASSIVE OAK THAT WAS THE CENTERPIECE OF ORORO'S GARDEN.
IT'S CENTURIES OLD, GROWN FROM AN ACORN THAT WAS ITSELF CREATED BY THE FIRST SPELL ORORO SUCCESSFULLY CAST AFTER HER ESCAPE FROM BELASCO.
THE ACORN WAS LIFE, PURE AND SIMPLE, UNMARRED BY LIMBO'S PRIMAL CORRUPTION.
ORORO'S MAGIC FLOWS SO STRONGLY THROUGH THE OAK THAT BELASCO COULDN'T SWEEP IT AWAY, LIKE HE DID EVERYTHING ELSE.
THE TREE MUST DIE NATURALLY, WORN DOWN BY THE ELEMENTS THAT ONCE NURTURED IT.

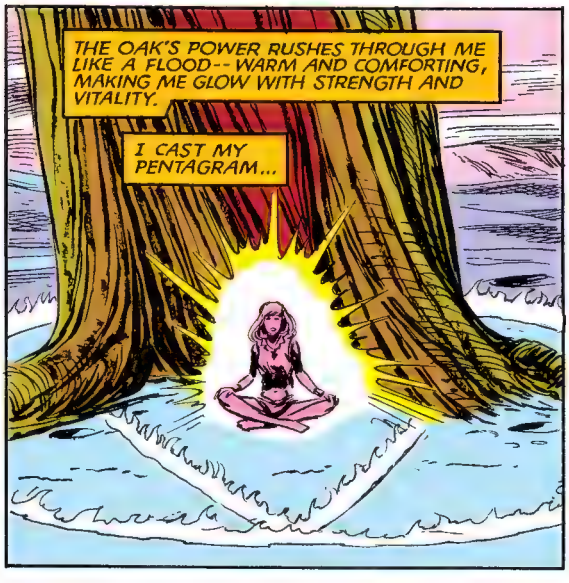

ITS TRUNK IS AS BROAD AS A HOUSE. I CAN USE IT FOR A WINDBREAK. BUT THEN WHAT? DO I STAY LIKE THIS FOREVER?
I WAS BELASCO'S APPRENTICE--AND BEFORE THEN, ORORO'S AS WELL.
PERHAPS I CAN TAP INTO THE OAK, DRAW SUSTENANCE FROM ITS NATURAL LIFE FORCE.
I EXTEND MY AWARENESS AS ORORO TAUGHT ME, BECOMING ONE WITH THE ANCIENT TREE-- RESISTING THE TEMPTATION TO PLAY WITH ITS ESSENCE, TO TRY TO MAKE THE OAK SOMETHING IT ISN'T--
--AND CAST A PENTAGRAM OF SILVER FIRE AROUND US BOTH.
I'M SHAKING WHEN IT'S DONE--FROM THE EFFORT AND FROM FEAR.
THE BELASCO SIDE OF ME IS STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT.
I MEAN TO FOLLOW ORORO'S LEAD.
I TAKE A PORTION OF MY OWN LIFE FORCE, MANIFESTING IT AS PURE ENERGY...
... AND MIX IT WITH THE NATURAL ELEMENTS AROUND ME...
...TO FORM AN ACORN.
I DID THIS ONCE BEFORE* BUT THAT ACORN ONLY LOOKED PERFECT; INSIDE, IT WAS ROTTEN TO THE CORE.
LIKE ME.
*LAST ISSUE-- L.
THIS ONE IS NO DIFFERENT.

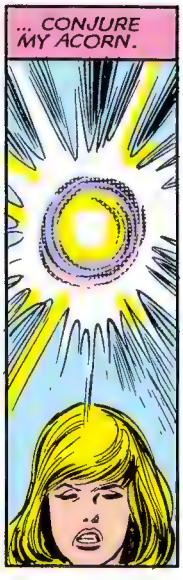

DAYS PASS-- WITHOUT CHANGE, WITHOUT END. I'VE NO IDEA HOW MANY.
I GROW A HEAD TALLER AND BECOME AS HARD AS MY WILDERNESS.
FOR AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, ALL IS DESOLATION-- NOTHING BUT ICE AND SNOW, UNMARKED BY ANY LIVING THING, SAVE FOR ME AND THE OAK.
AND SOON, THE OAK WILL BE NO MORE.


EACH TIME I DRAW ON YOUR STRENGTH, OLD FRIEND, FOR SUSTENANCE OR SPELLS, I HASTEN YOUR END. NOW YOU'VE SO LITTLE LEFT TO GIVE.
YOU WERE SO BEAUTIFUL WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU, YOUR MAJESTY TOOK MY BREATH AWAY.


FORGIVE ME.
I NEVER MEAN TO BRING DOOM AND DESTRUCTION TO THOSE I CARE FOR, BUT I ALWAYS DO.

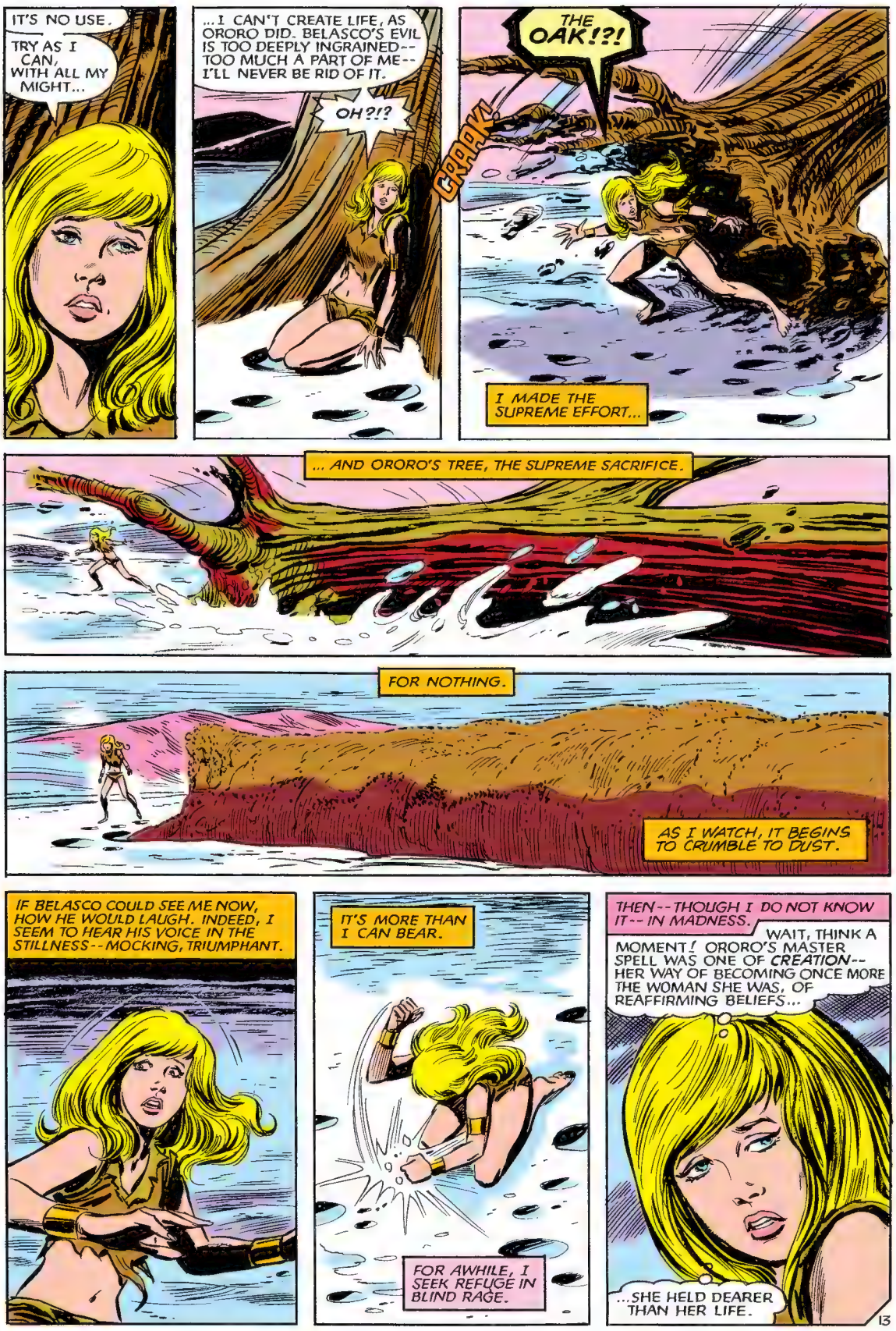

THERE'S NO WIND OR SNOW THIS MORNING, I TAKE THAT AS A FAVORABLE OMEN. PERHAPS THIS TIME, I'LL BE SUCCESSFUL.

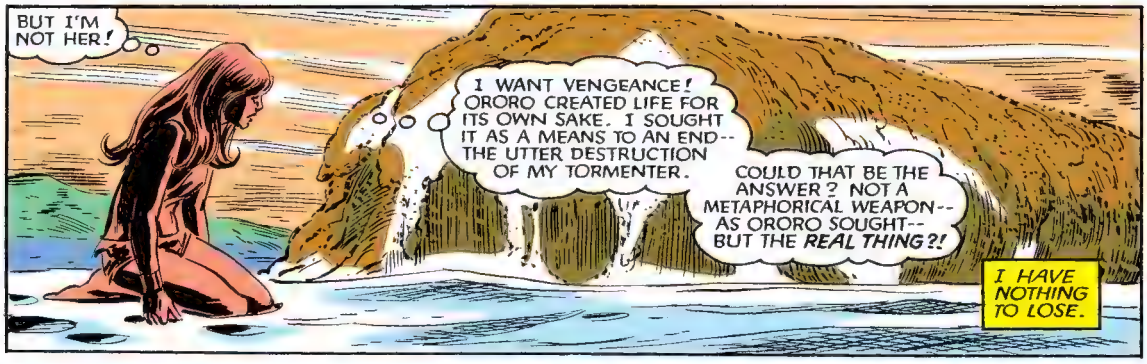

THE OAK'S POWER RUSHES THROUGH ME LIKE A FLOOD-- WARM AND COMFORTING, MAKING ME GLOW WITH STRENGTH AND VITALITY.
I CAST MY PENTAGRAM...

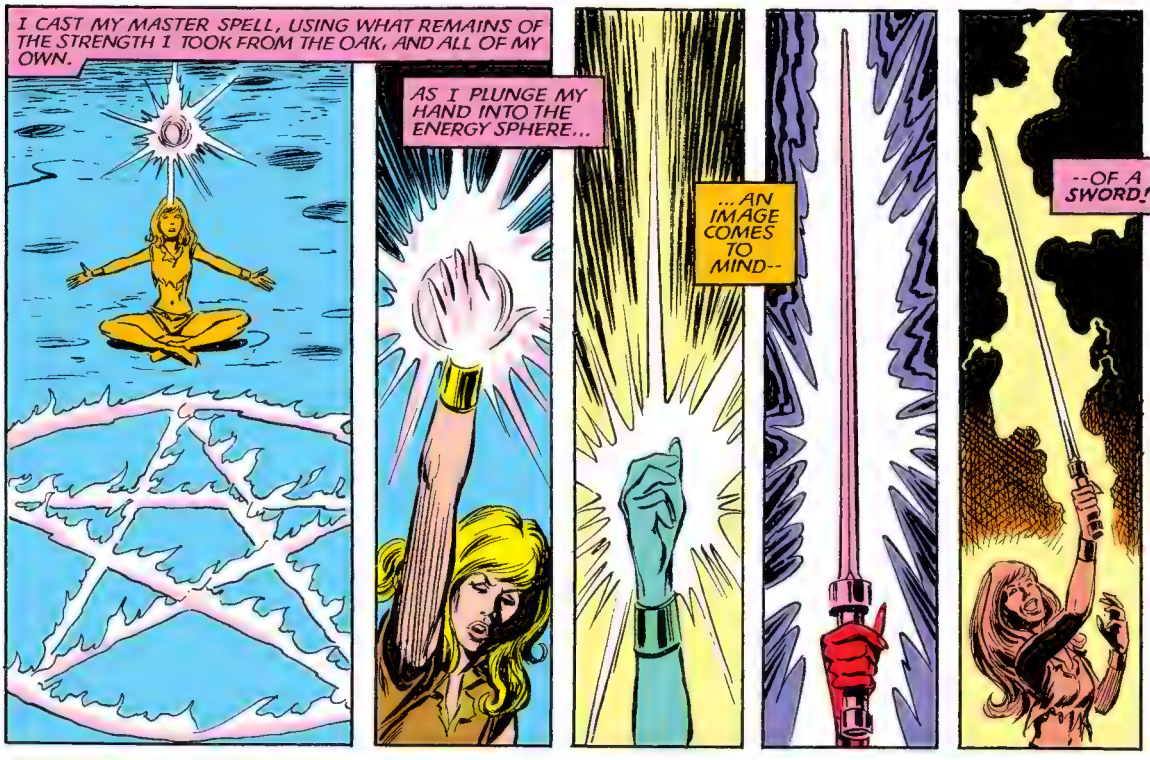

... CONJURE MY ACORN.

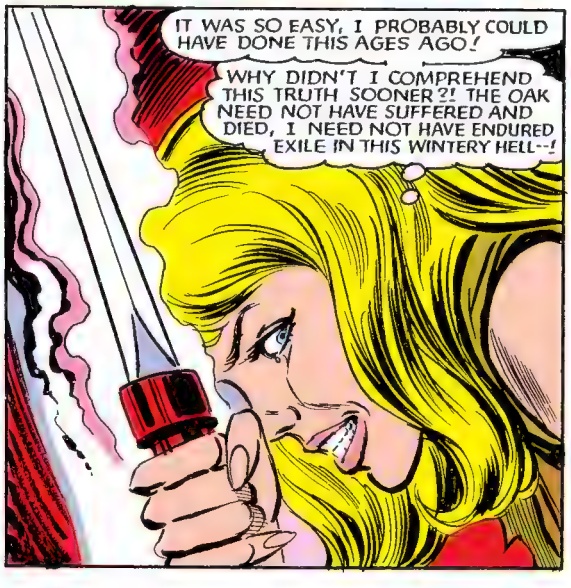
I HAVE SUCH HIGH HOPES.

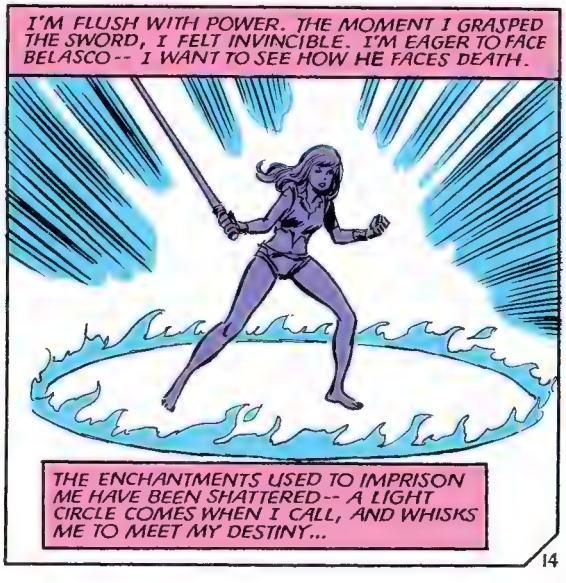
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

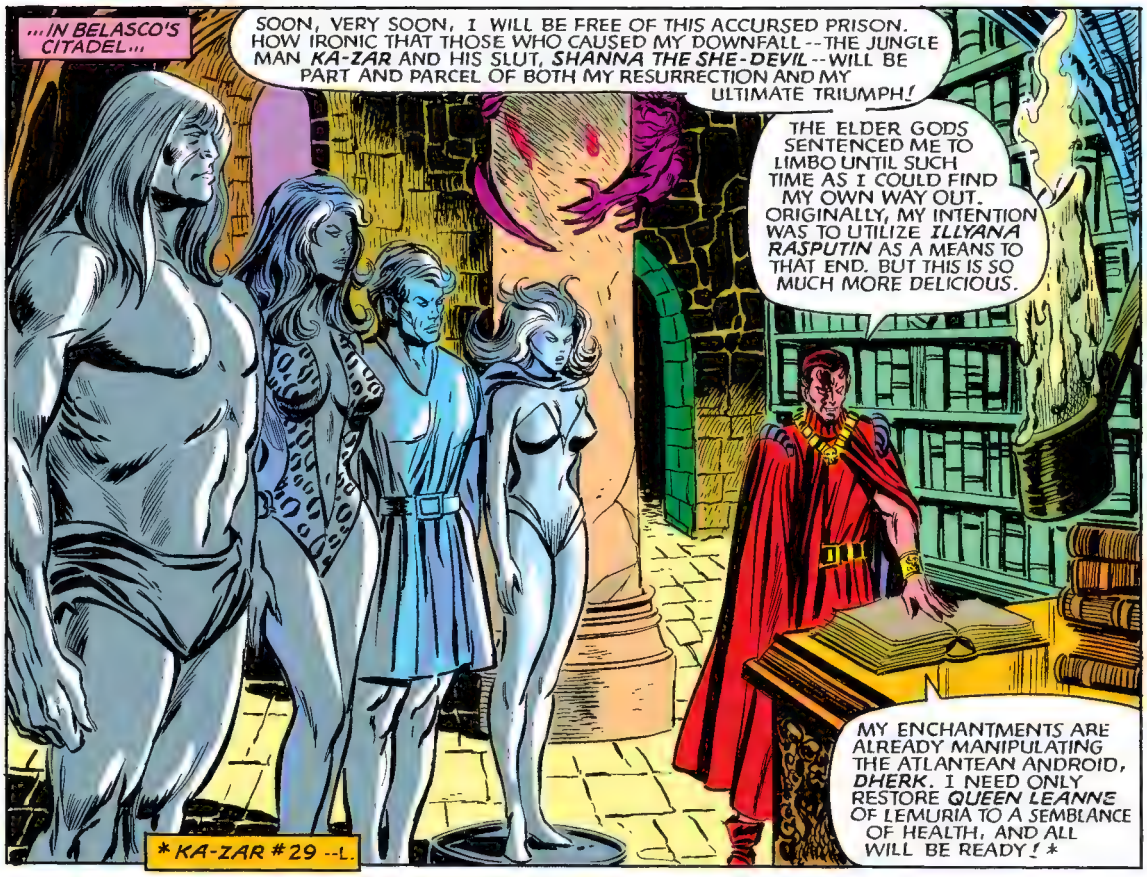

IT'S NO USE.
TRY AS I CAN, WITH ALL MY MIGHT...
...I CAN'T CREATE LIFE, AS ORORO DID. BELASCO'S EVIL IS TOO DEEPLY INGRAINED--TOO MUCH A PART OF ME--I'LL NEVER BE RID OF IT.
OH?!?
CRACK!
THE OAK!?!
I MADE THE SUPREME EFFORT...
... AND ORORO'S TREE, THE SUPREME SACRIFICE.
FOR NOTHING.
AS I WATCH, IT BEGINS TO CRUMBLE TO DUST.
IF BELASCO COULD SEE ME NOW, HOW HE WOULD LAUGH. INDEED, I SEEM TO HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STILLNESS--MOCKING, TRIUMPHANT.
IT'S MORE THAN I CAN BEAR.
FOR AWHILE, I SEEK REFUGE IN BLIND RAGE.
THEN--THOUGH I DO NOT KNOW IT--IN MADNESS.
WAIT, THINK A MOMENT! ORORO'S MASTER SPELL WAS ONE OF CREATION--HER WAY OF BECOMING ONCE MORE THE WOMAN SHE WAS, OF REAFFIRMING BELIEFS...
...SHE HELD DEARER THAN HER LIFE.

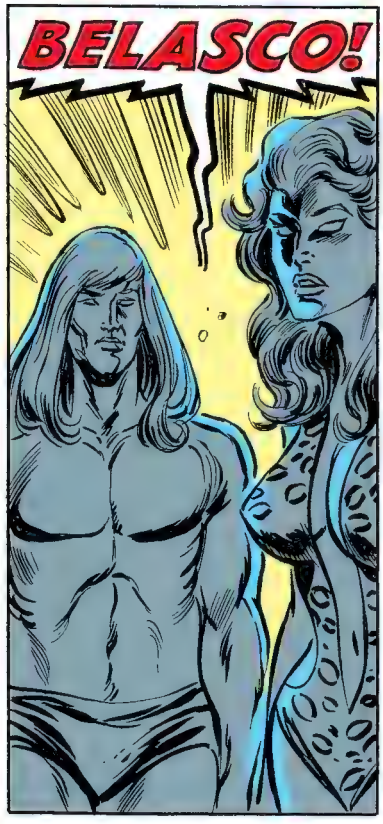

BUT I'M NOT HER!
I WANT VENGEANCE! ORORO CREATED LIFE FOR ITS OWN SAKE. I SOUGHT IT AS A MEANS TO AN END-- THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF MY TORMENTER.
COULD THAT BE THE ANSWER? NOT A METAPHORICAL WEAPON-- AS ORORO SOUGHT-- BUT THE REAL THING?!
I HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.

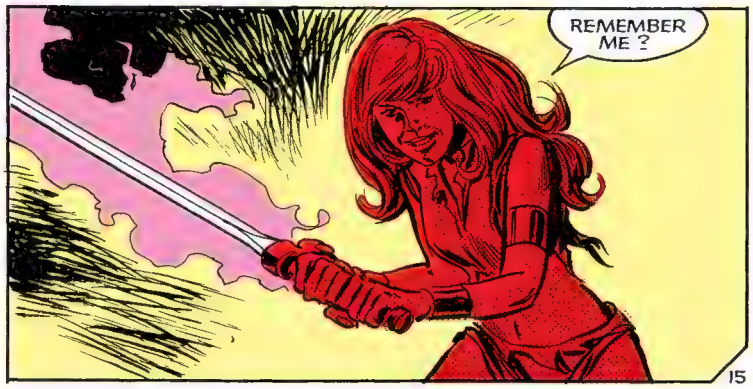

I CAST MY MASTER SPELL, USING WHAT REMAINS OF THE STRENGTH I TOOK FROM THE OAK, AND ALL OF MY OWN.
AS I PLUNGE MY HAND INTO THE ENERGY SPHERE...
...AN IMAGE COMES TO MIND--
--OF A SWORD!

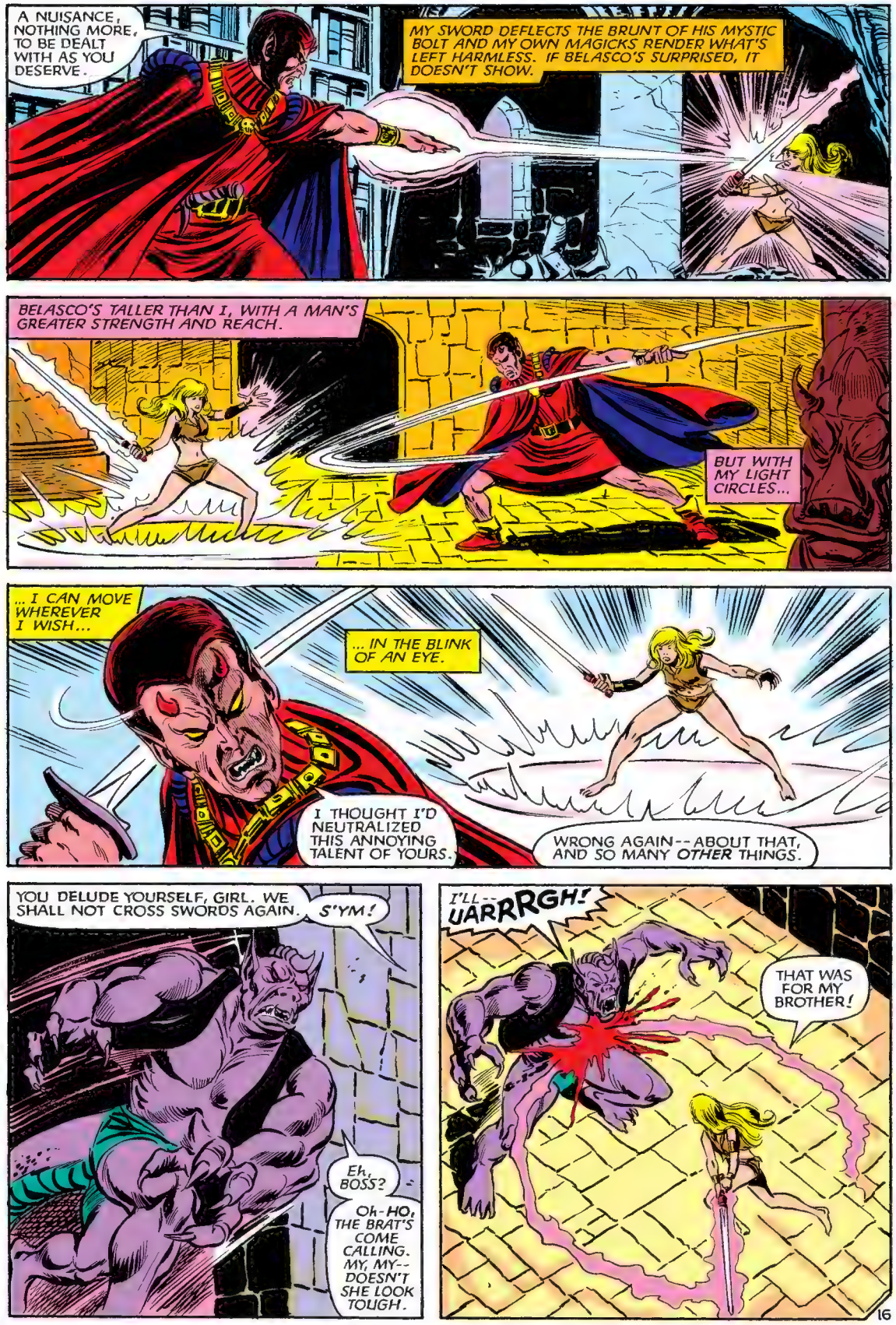

IT WAS SO EASY, I PROBABLY COULD HAVE DONE THIS AGES AGO!
WHY DIDN'T I COMPREHEND THIS TRUTH SOONER?! THE OAK NEED NOT HAVE SUFFERED AND DIED, I NEED NOT HAVE ENDURED EXILE IN THIS WINTERY HELL--!

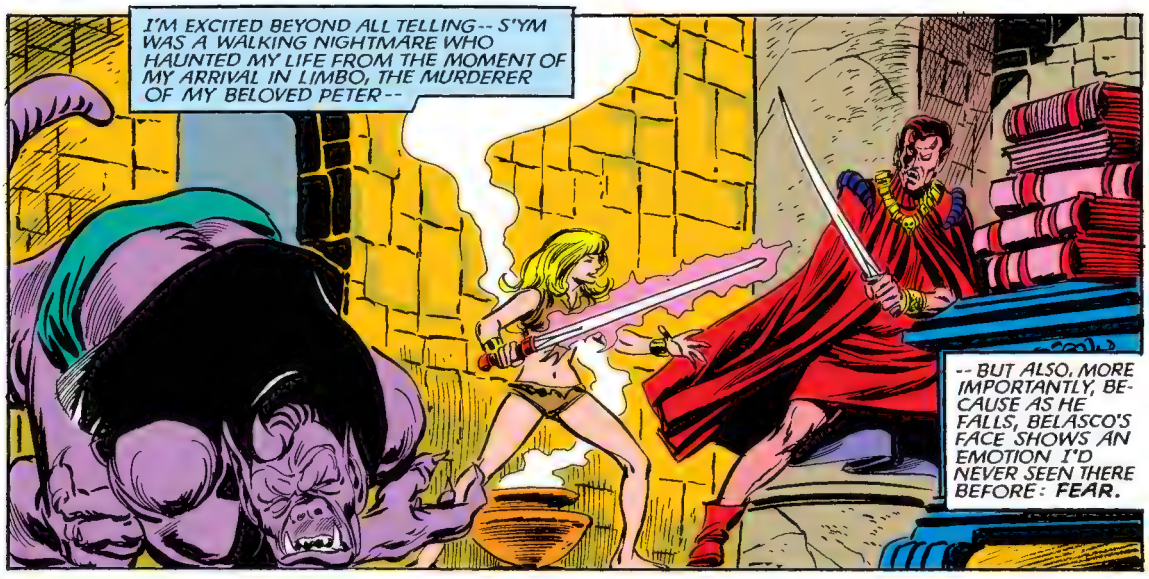

I'M FLUSH WITH POWER. THE MOMENT I GRASPED THE SWORD, I FELT INVINCIBLE. I'M EAGER TO FACE BELASCO-- I WANT TO SEE HOW HE FACES DEATH.
THE ENCHANTMENTS USED TO IMPRISON ME HAVE BEEN SHATTERED-- A LIGHT CIRCLE COMES WHEN I CALL, AND WHISKS ME TO MEET MY DESTINY...

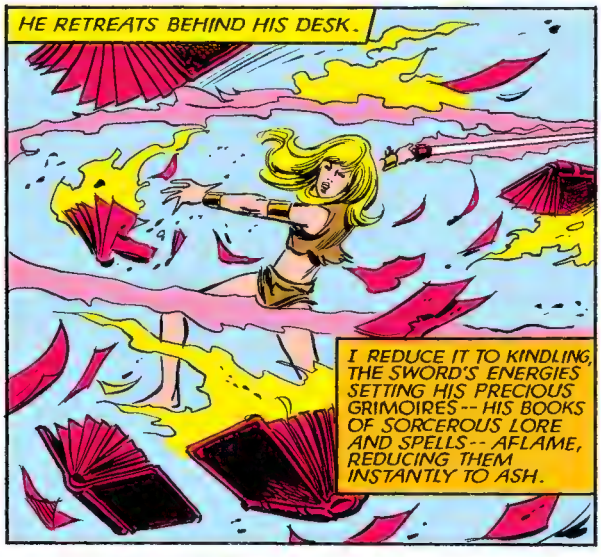

...IN BELASCO'S CITADEL...
SOON, VERY SOON, I WILL BE FREE OF THIS ACCURSED PRISON. HOW IRONIC THAT THOSE WHO CAUSED MY DOWNFALL--THE JUNGLE MAN KA-ZAR AND HIS SLUT, SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL--WILL BE PART AND PARCEL OF BOTH MY RESURRECTION AND MY ULTIMATE TRIUMPH!
THE ELDER GODS SENTENCED ME TO LIMBO UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I COULD FIND MY OWN WAY OUT. ORIGINALLY, MY INTENTION WAS TO UTILIZE ILLYANA RASPUTIN AS A MEANS TO THAT END. BUT THIS IS SO MUCH MORE DELICIOUS.
MY ENCHANTMENTS ARE ALREADY MANIPULATING THE ATLANTEAN ANDROID, DHERK. I NEED ONLY RESTORE QUEEN LEANNE OF LEMURIA TO A SEMBLANCE OF HEALTH, AND ALL WILL BE READY!*
*KA-ZAR #29 --L.


BELASCO!

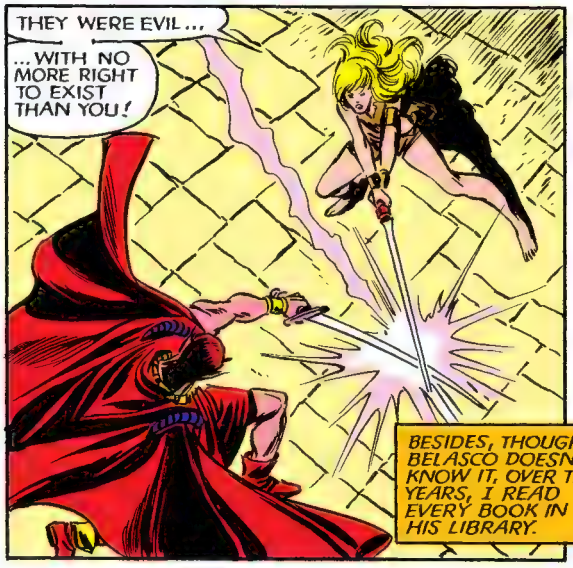

REMEMBER ME?


A NUISANCE, NOTHING MORE, TO BE DEALT WITH AS YOU DESERVE.
MY SWORD DEFLECTS THE BRUNT OF HIS MYSTIC BOLT AND MY OWN MAGICKS RENDER WHAT'S LEFT HARMLESS. IF BELASCO'S SURPRISED, IT DOESN'T SHOW.
BELASCO'S TALLER THAN I, WITH A MAN'S GREATER STRENGTH AND REACH.
BUT WITH MY LIGHT CIRCLES...
... I CAN MOVE WHEREVER I WISH...
... IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
I THOUGHT I'D NEUTRALIZED THIS ANNOYING TALENT OF YOURS.
WRONG AGAIN--ABOUT THAT, AND SO MANY OTHER THINGS.
YOU DELUDE YOURSELF, GIRL. WE SHALL NOT CROSS SWORDS AGAIN.
S'YM!
Eh, BOSS?
Oh-HO, THE BRAT'S COME CALLING. MY, MY--DOESN'T SHE LOOK TOUGH.
I'LL-- UARRRGH!
THAT WAS FOR MY BROTHER!


I'M EXCITED BEYOND ALL TELLING-- S'YM WAS A WALKING NIGHTMARE WHO HAUNTED MY LIFE FROM THE MOMENT OF MY ARRIVAL IN LIMBO, THE MURDERER OF MY BELOVED PETER--
-- BUT ALSO, MORE IMPORTANTLY, BECAUSE AS HE FALLS, BELASCO'S FACE SHOWS AN EMOTION I'D NEVER SEEN THERE BEFORE: FEAR.

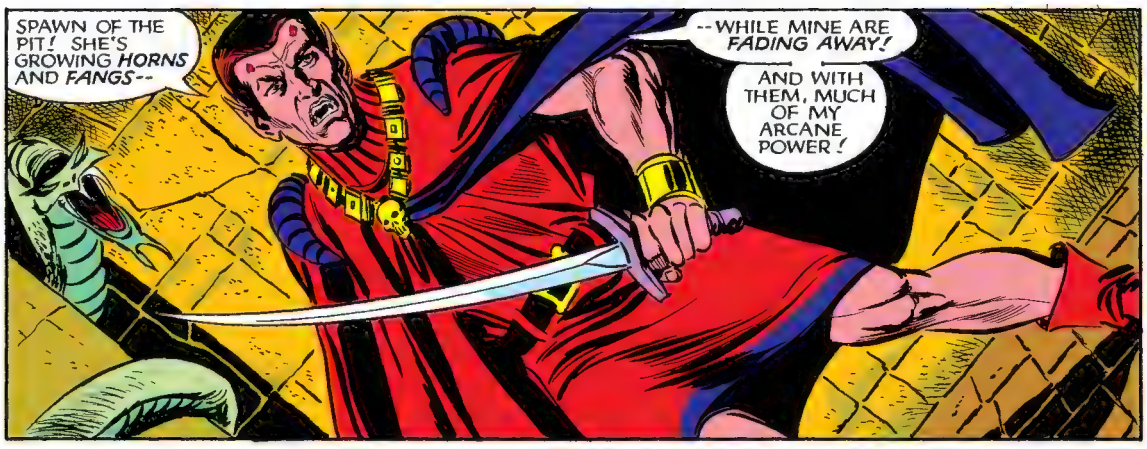

HE RETREATS BEHIND HIS DESK.
I REDUCE IT TO KINDLING, THE SWORD'S ENERGIES SETTING HIS PRECIOUS GRIMOIRES-- HIS BOOKS OF SORCEROUS LORE AND SPELLS-- AFLAME, REDUCING THEM INSTANTLY TO ASH.

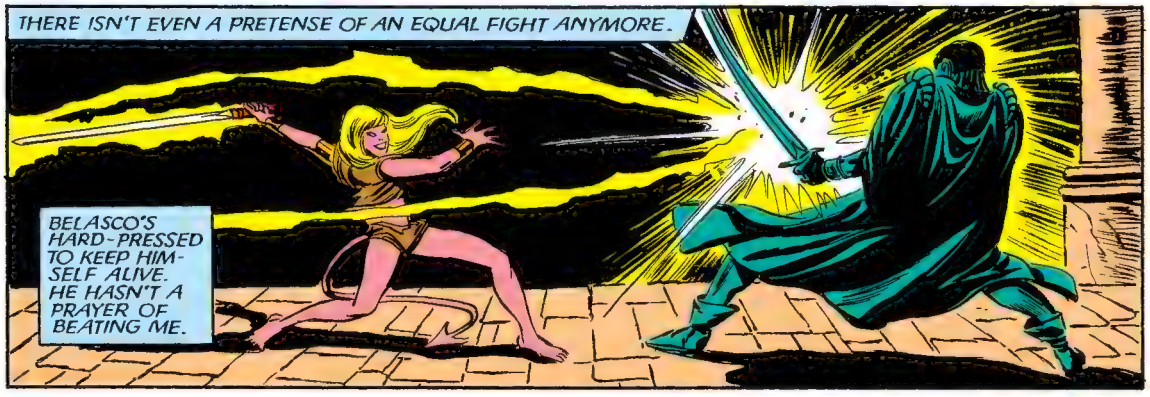
ILLYANA! CURSE YOU, DARKCHILD, HAVE YOU ANY IDEA OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
THAT REPRESENTS THE KNOWLEDGE OF AEONS! MUCH OF IT IS IRREPLACABLE!!


THEY WERE EVIL...
...WITH NO MORE RIGHT TO EXIST THAN YOU!
BESIDES, THOUGH BELASCO DOESN'T KNOW IT, OVER THE YEARS, I READ EVERY BOOK IN HIS LIBRARY.

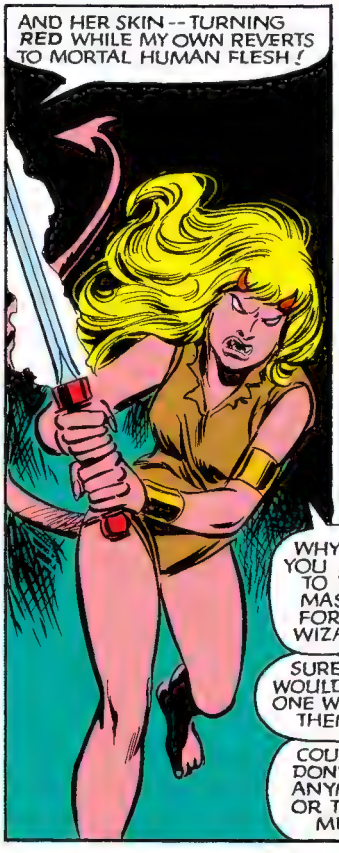
THE LEARNING ISN'T LOST, IT'S MERELY BEEN PASSED FROM ONE DEMON MAGE...

...TO ANOTHER.

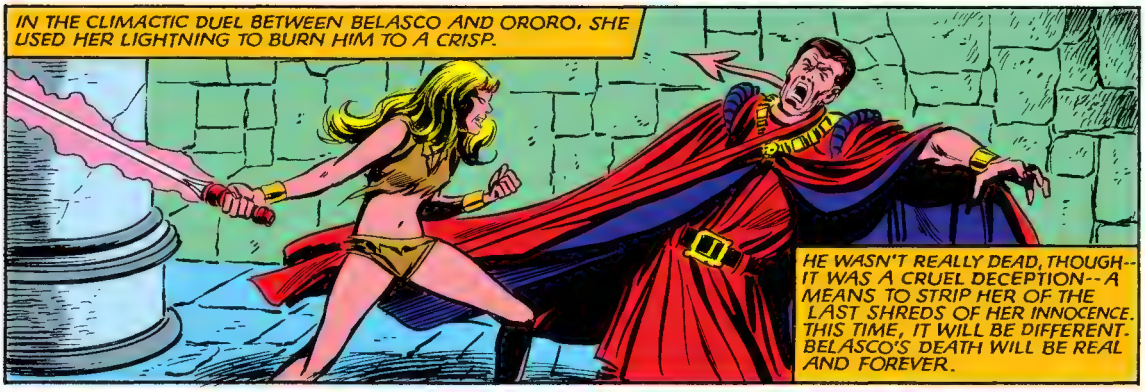

SPAWN OF THE PIT! SHE'S GROWING *HORNS* AND *FANGS*--
--WHILE MINE ARE *FADING AWAY!*
AND WITH THEM, MUCH OF MY ARCANE POWER!

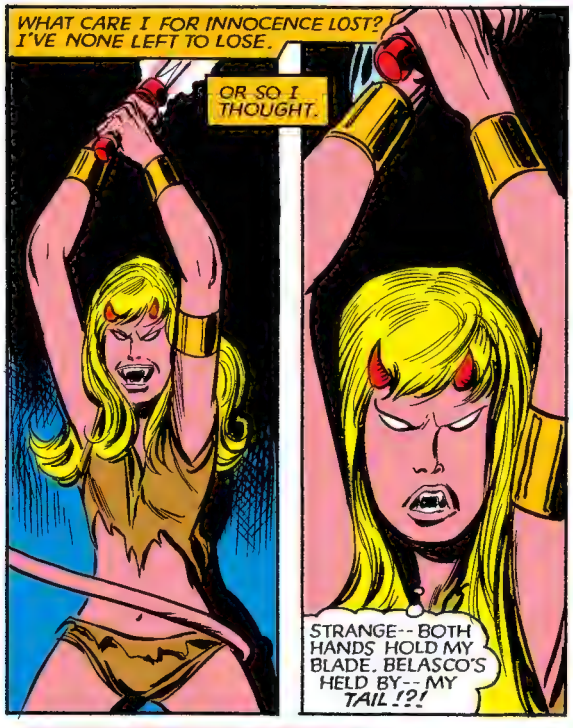

THERE ISN'T EVEN A PRETENSE OF AN EQUAL FIGHT ANYMORE.
BELASCO'S HARD-PRESSED TO KEEP HIMSELF ALIVE. HE HASN'T A PRAYER OF BEATING ME.

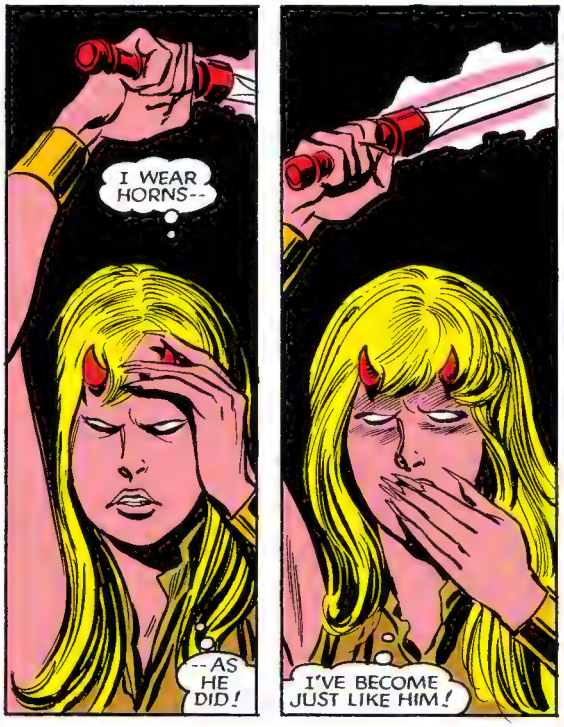
*HE LOOKS POSITIVELY TERRIFIED. I **ALMOST** FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.*
A TAIL--!


AND HER SKIN--TURNING **RED** WHILE MY OWN REVERTS TO MORTAL HUMAN FLESH!

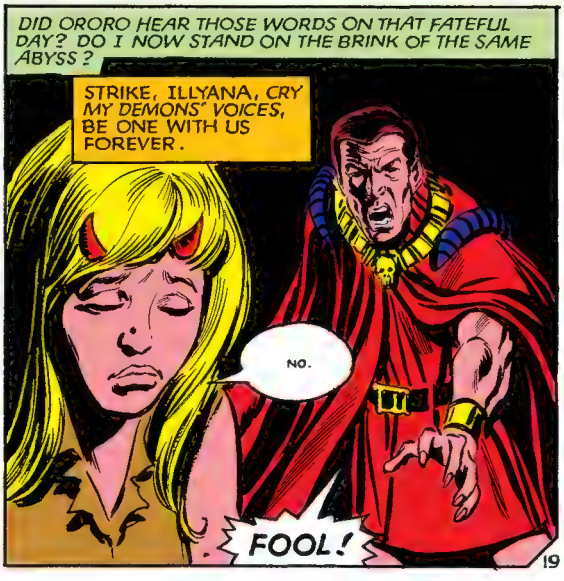
WHY DON'T YOU APPEAL TO YOUR MASTERS FOR AID, WIZARD?
SURELY THEY WOULDN'T ABANDON ONE WHO'S SERVED THEM SO WELL.
COULD IT BE THEY DON'T LIKE YOU ANYMORE, BELASCO--OR THAT THEY LIKE ME *BETTER*?

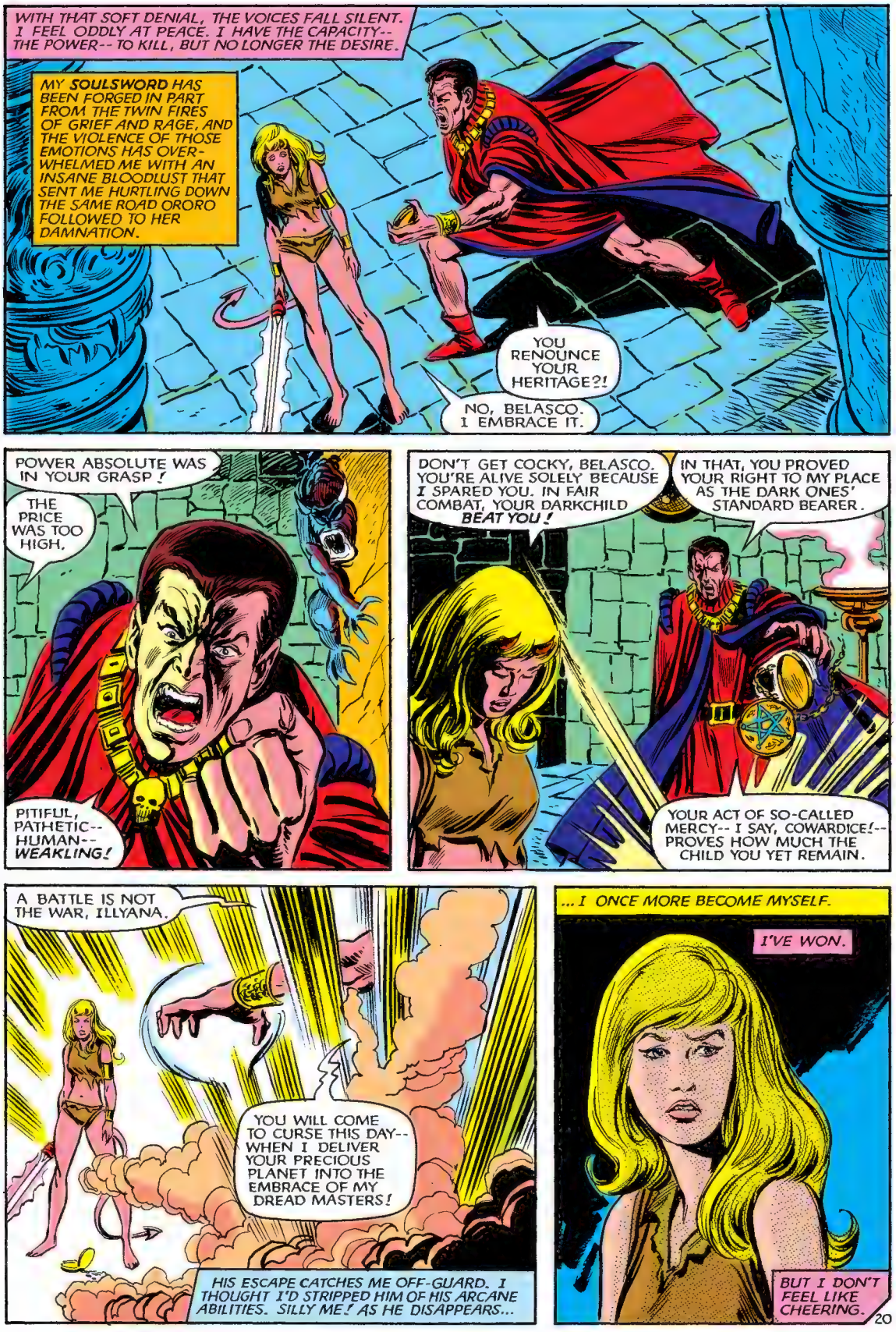

IN THE CLIMACTIC DUEL BETWEEN BELASCO AND ORORO, SHE USED HER LIGHTNING TO BURN HIM TO A CRISP.
HE WASN'T REALLY DEAD, THOUGH--IT WAS A CRUEL DECEPTION--A MEANS TO STRIP HER OF THE LAST SHREDS OF HER INNOCENCE. THIS TIME, IT WILL BE DIFFERENT. BELASCO'S DEATH WILL BE REAL AND FOREVER.

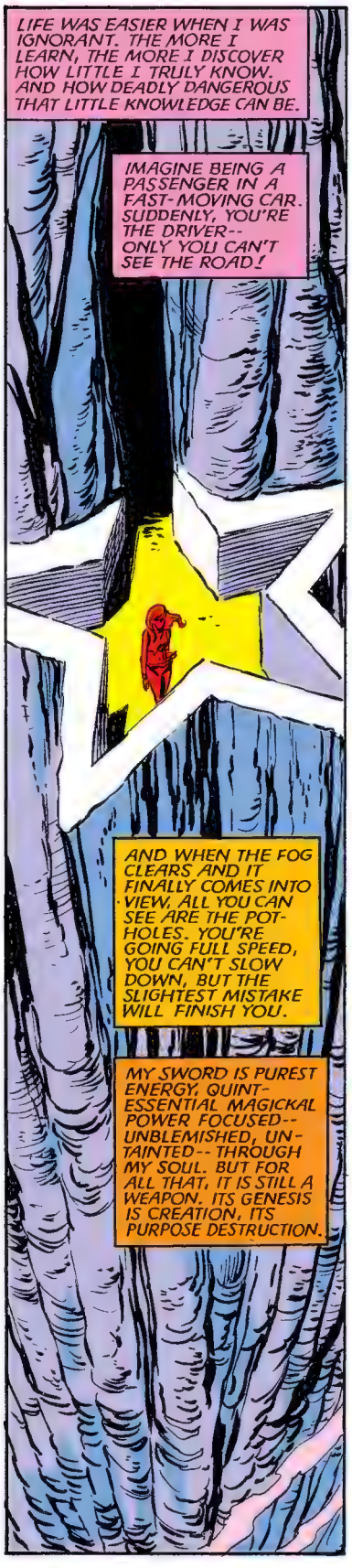

WHAT CARE I FOR INNOCENCE LOST? I'VE NONE LEFT TO LOSE.
OR SO I THOUGHT.
STRANGE--BOTH HANDS HOLD MY BLADE. BELASCO'S HELD BY--MY TAIL!?!

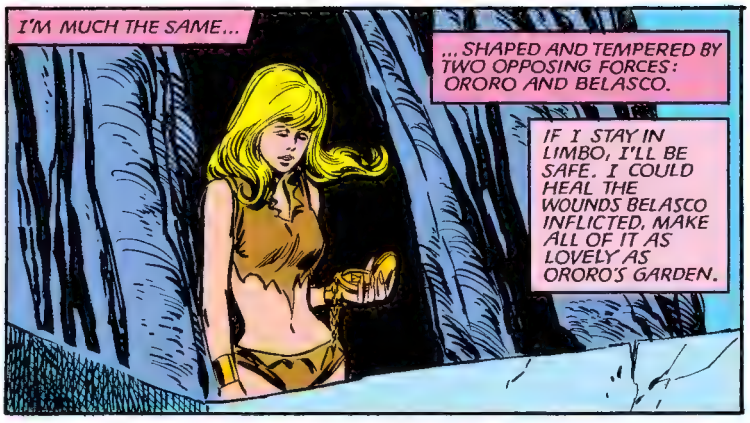

I WEAR HORNS--
--AS HE DID!
I'VE BECOME JUST LIKE HIM!

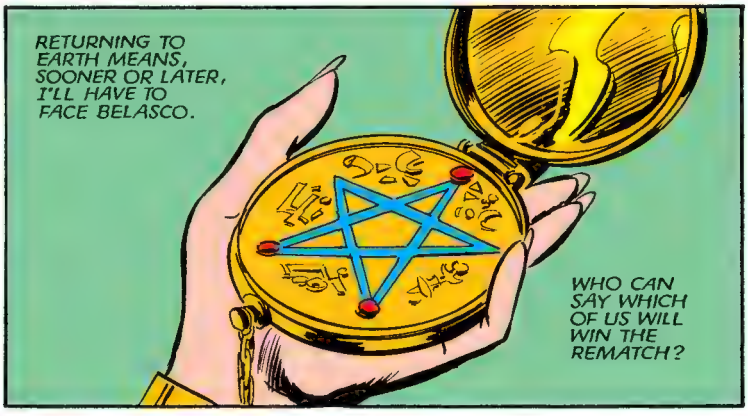
SO WHAT? INNER VOICES SHRIEK.
IT'S BELASCO THAT'S IMPORTANT, KILL HIM WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE, ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANT--KILL HIM!

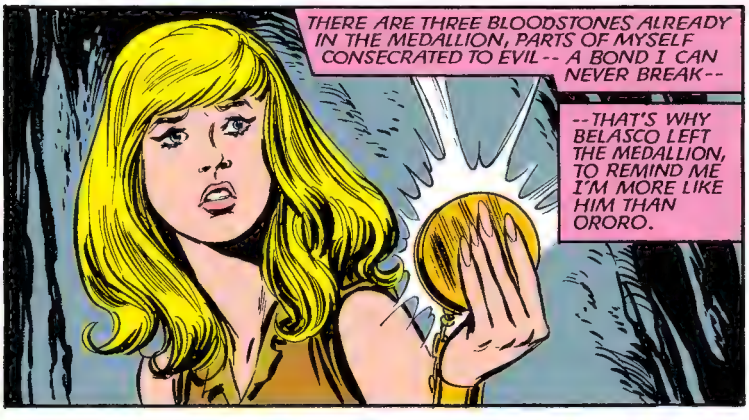

DID ORORO HEAR THOSE WORDS ON THAT FATEFUL DAY? DO I NOW STAND ON THE BRINK OF THE SAME ABYSS?
STRIKE, ILLYANA, CRY MY DEMONS' VOICES, BE ONE WITH US FOREVER.
NO.
FOOL!

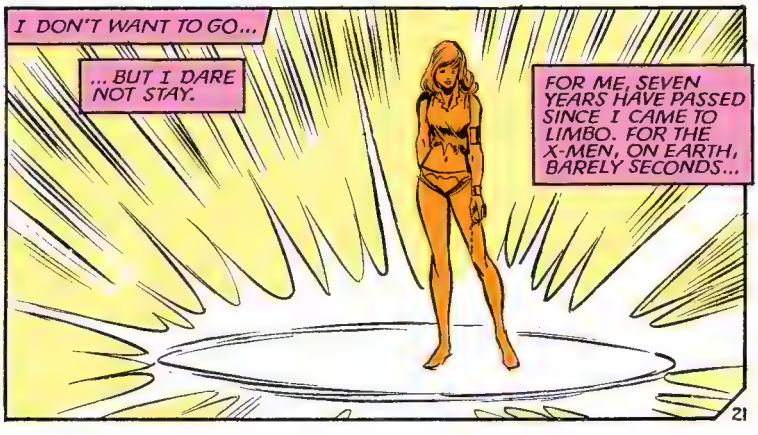

WITH THAT SOFT DENIAL, THE VOICES FALL SILENT. I FEEL ODDLY AT PEACE. I HAVE THE CAPACITY-- THE POWER-- TO KILL, BUT NO LONGER THE DESIRE.
MY SOULSWORD HAS BEEN FORGED IN PART FROM THE TWIN FIRES OF GRIEF AND RAGE, AND THE VIOLENCE OF THOSE EMOTIONS HAS OVER-WHELMED ME WITH AN INSANE BLOODLUST THAT SENT ME HURTLING DOWN THE SAME ROAD ORORO FOLLOWED TO HER DAMNATION.
YOU RENOUNCE YOUR HERITAGE?!
NO, BELASCO. I EMBRACE IT.
POWER ABSOLUTE WAS IN YOUR GRASP!
THE PRICE WAS TOO HIGH.
PITIFUL, PATHETIC-- HUMAN-- WEAKLING!
DON'T GET COCKY, BELASCO. YOU'RE ALIVE SOLELY BECAUSE I SPARED YOU. IN FAIR COMBAT, YOUR DARKCHILD BEAT YOU!
IN THAT, YOU PROVED YOUR RIGHT TO MY PLACE AS THE DARK ONES' STANDARD BEARER.
YOUR ACT OF SO-CALLED MERCY-- I SAY, COWARDICE!-- PROVES HOW MUCH THE CHILD YOU YET REMAIN.
A BATTLE IS NOT THE WAR, ILLYANA.
YOU WILL COME TO CURSE THIS DAY-- WHEN I DELIVER YOUR PRECIOUS PLANET INTO THE EMBRACE OF MY DREAD MASTERS!
HIS ESCAPE CATCHES ME OFF-GUARD. I THOUGHT I'D STRIPPED HIM OF HIS ARCANE ABILITIES. SILLY ME! AS HE DISAPPEARS...
... I ONCE MORE BECOME MYSELF.
I'VE WON.
BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE CHEERING.


LIFE WAS EASIER WHEN I WAS IGNORANT. THE MORE I LEARN, THE MORE I DISCOVER HOW LITTLE I TRULY KNOW. AND HOW DEADLY DANGEROUS THAT LITTLE KNOWLEDGE CAN BE.
IMAGINE BEING A PASSENGER IN A FAST-MOVING CAR. SUDDENLY, YOU'RE THE DRIVER-- ONLY YOU CAN'T SEE THE ROAD!
AND WHEN THE FOG CLEARS AND IT FINALLY COMES INTO VIEW, ALL YOU CAN SEE ARE THE POT-HOLES. YOU'RE GOING FULL SPEED, YOU CAN'T SLOW DOWN, BUT THE SLIGHTEST MISTAKE WILL FINISH YOU.
MY SWORD IS PUREST ENERGY, QUINT-ESSENTIAL MAGICKAL POWER FOCUSED-- UNBLEMISHED, UN-TAINTED-- THROUGH MY SOUL. BUT FOR ALL THAT, IT IS STILL A WEAPON. ITS GENESIS IS CREATION, ITS PURPOSE DESTRUCTION.

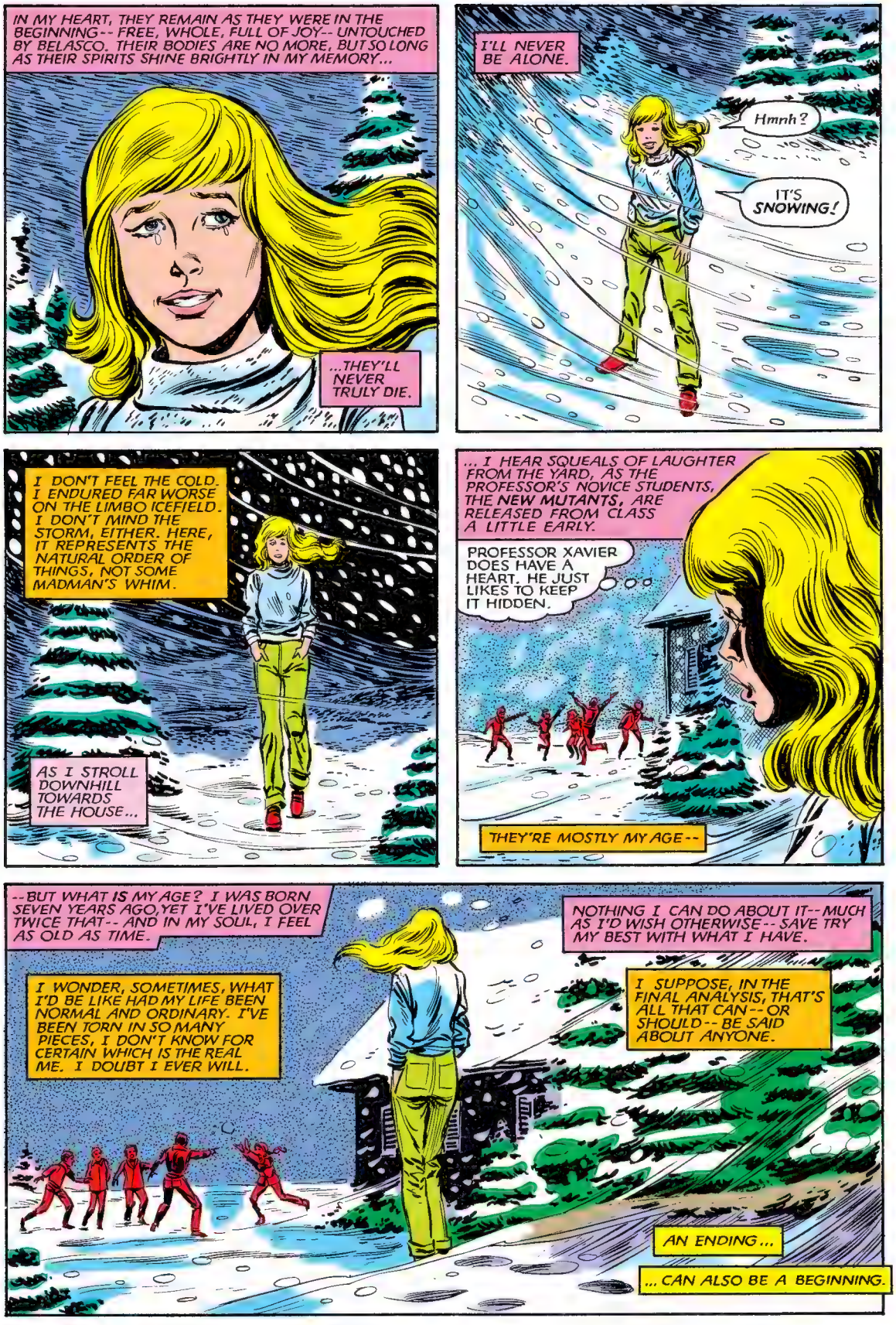

I'M MUCH THE SAME...
...SHAPED AND TEMPERED BY TWO OPPOSING FORCES: ORORO AND BELASCO.
IF I STAY IN LIMBO, I'LL BE SAFE. I COULD HEAL THE WOUNDS BELASCO INFLICTED, MAKE ALL OF IT AS LOVELY AS ORORO'S GARDEN.

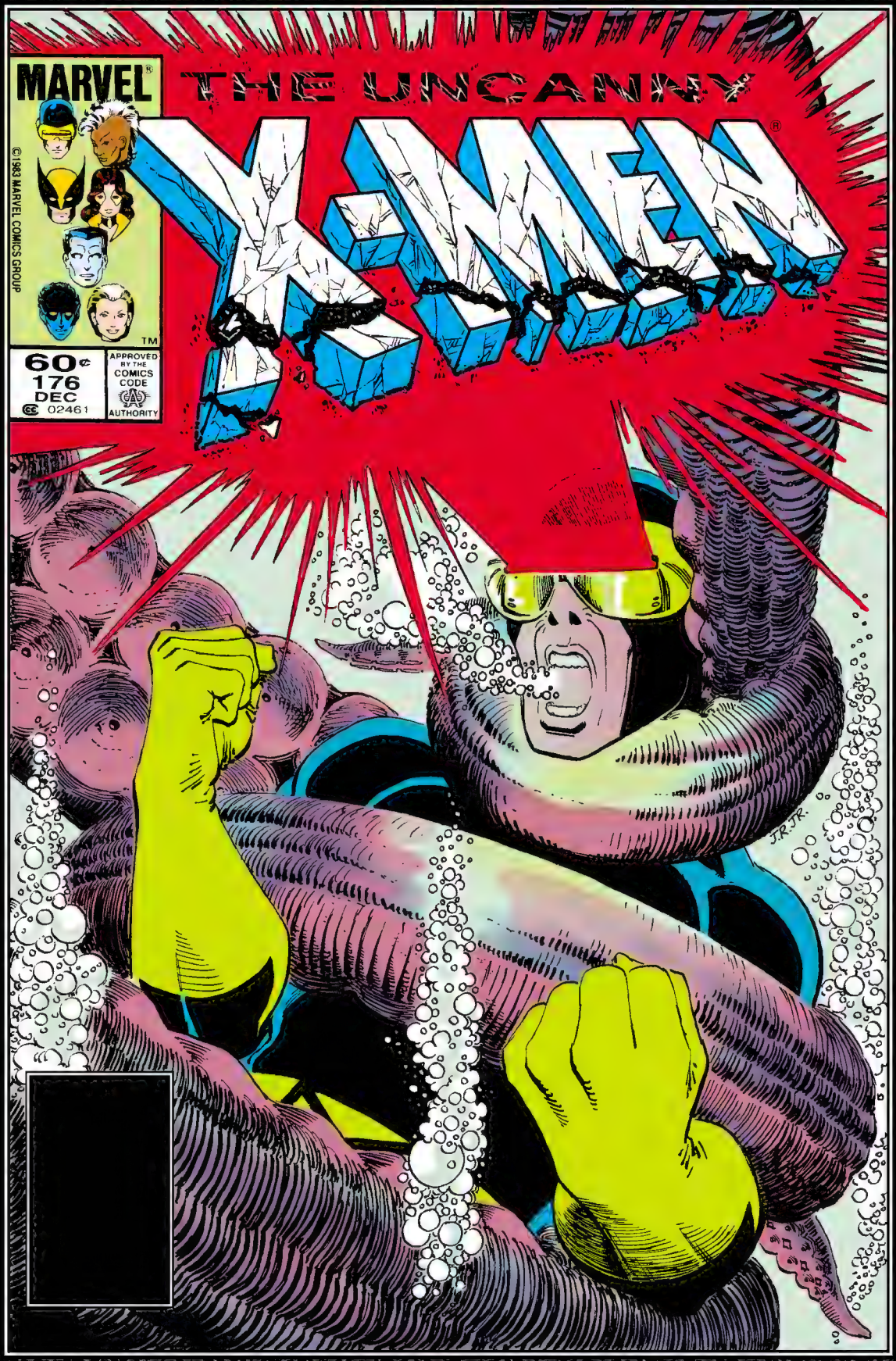

RETURNING TO EARTH MEANS, SOONER OR LATER, I'LL HAVE TO FACE BELASCO.
WHO CAN SAY WHICH OF US WILL WIN THE REMATCH?


THERE ARE THREE BLOODSTONES ALREADY IN THE MEDALLION, PARTS OF MYSELF CONSECRATED TO EVIL -- A BOND I CAN NEVER BREAK--
--THAT'S WHY BELASCO LEFT THE MEDALLION, TO REMIND ME I'M MORE LIKE HIM THAN ORORO.


I DON'T WANT TO GO...
... BUT I DARE NOT STAY.
FOR ME, SEVEN YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE I CAME TO LIMBO. FOR THE X-MEN, ON EARTH, BARELY SECONDS...

MY APPEARANCE THERE...
THERE SHE IS!
HELP ME-- ALL OF YOU-- I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH!
PULL!
... WILL PROVE SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE.
WE DID IT!
〈ILLYANA NIKOLOVNA-- BELOVED SISTER-- WELCOME...*〉
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN -- L.
〈...HOME...?〉
〈PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH, IS... IS THAT YOU? REALLY YOU?!?〉
I USED MY POWERS TO DRESS FOR THE OCCASION. I HOPE THEY LIKE IT.
THAT WAS A YEAR AGO.*
I RETURNED WITH THE X-MEN TO THEIR HOME IN NEW YORK, AT PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL. I'D ALREADY BEEN TO MY PARENTS', I SAW NO REASON TO MAKE ANOTHER TRY.
FOR AWHILE, I PUT MY PAST BEHIND ME.
* X-MEN #160 -- L.
BUT I CANNOT DENY WHO OR WHAT I AM, OR HOW I CAME TO BE.
I HAVE GIFTS-- AND LIKE ALL SUCH, MAGICKAL OR MUTANT, THEY CAN BE USED FOR GOOD OR ILL. THE CHOICE IS MINE, AS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY.
FRIENDS I LOVED CARED ENOUGH FOR ME TO RISK--AND LOSE--THEIR LIVES IN MY DEFENSE. I MEAN TO BE WORTHY OF THEIR SACRIFICE.


IN MY HEART, THEY REMAIN AS THEY WERE IN THE BEGINNING-- FREE, WHOLE, FULL OF JOY-- UNTOUCHED BY BELASCO. THEIR BODIES ARE NO MORE, BUT SO LONG AS THEIR SPIRITS SHINE BRIGHTLY IN MY MEMORY...
...THEY'LL NEVER TRULY DIE.
I'LL NEVER BE ALONE.
Hmnh?
IT'S SNOWING!
I DON'T FEEL THE COLD. I ENDURED FAR WORSE ON THE LIMBO ICEFIELD. I DON'T MIND THE STORM, EITHER. HERE, IT REPRESENTS THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS, NOT SOME MADMAN'S WHIM.
AS I STROLL DOWNHILL TOWARDS THE HOUSE...
... I HEAR SQUEALS OF LAUGHTER FROM THE YARD, AS THE PROFESSOR'S NOVICE STUDENTS, THE NEW MUTANTS, ARE RELEASED FROM CLASS A LITTLE EARLY.
PROFESSOR XAVIER DOES HAVE A HEART. HE JUST LIKES TO KEEP IT HIDDEN.
THEY'RE MOSTLY MY AGE--
--BUT WHAT IS MY AGE? I WAS BORN SEVEN YEARS AGO, YET I'VE LIVED OVER TWICE THAT-- AND IN MY SOUL, I FEEL AS OLD AS TIME.
I WONDER, SOMETIMES, WHAT I'D BE LIKE HAD MY LIFE BEEN NORMAL AND ORDINARY. I'VE BEEN TORN IN SO MANY PIECES, I DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHICH IS THE REAL ME. I DOUBT I EVER WILL.
NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT-- MUCH AS I'D WISH OTHERWISE-- SAVE TRY MY BEST WITH WHAT I HAVE.
I SUPPOSE, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THAT'S ALL THAT CAN-- OR SHOULD-- BE SAID ABOUT ANYONE.
AN ENDING...
...CAN ALSO BE A BEGINNING.


MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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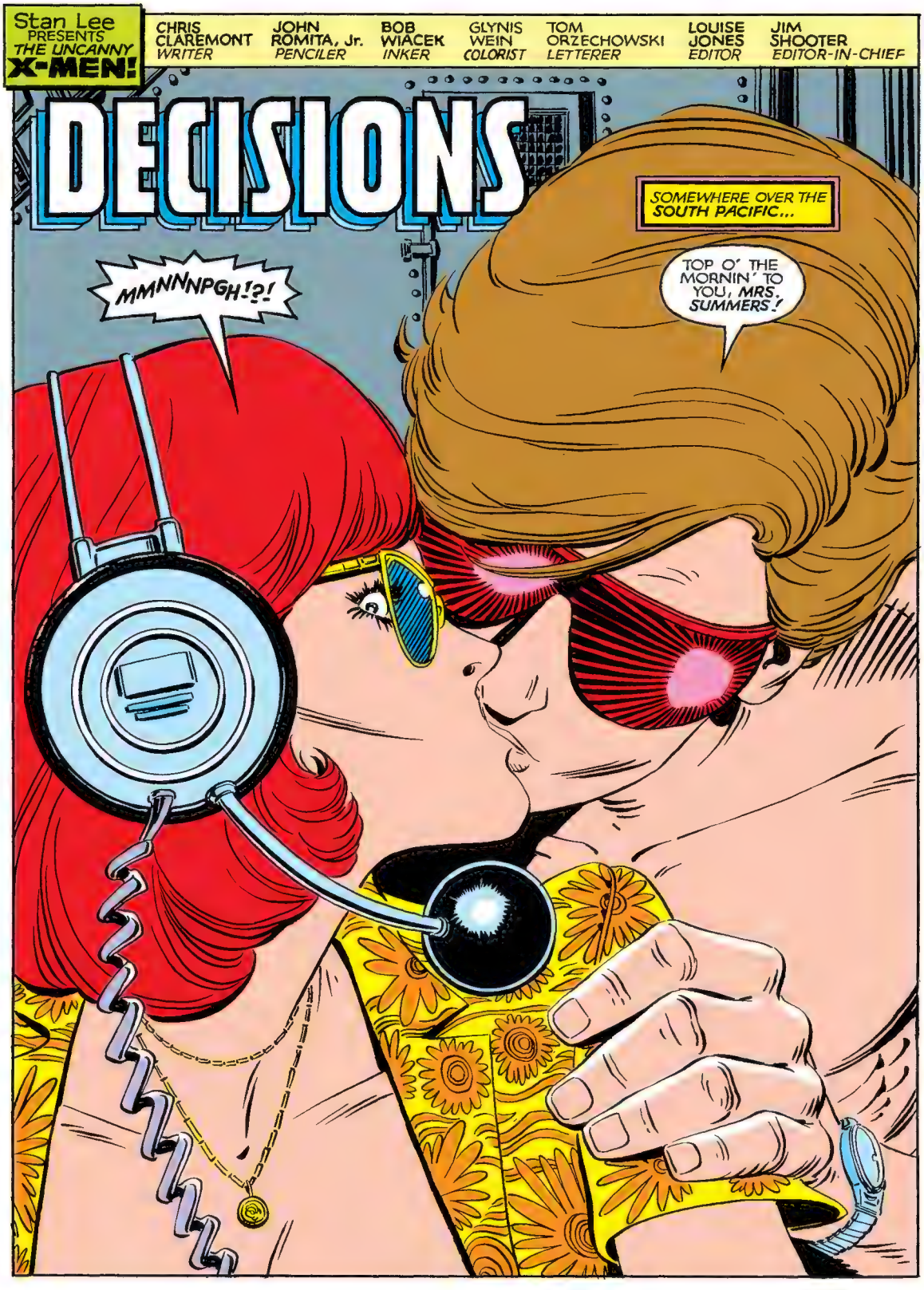
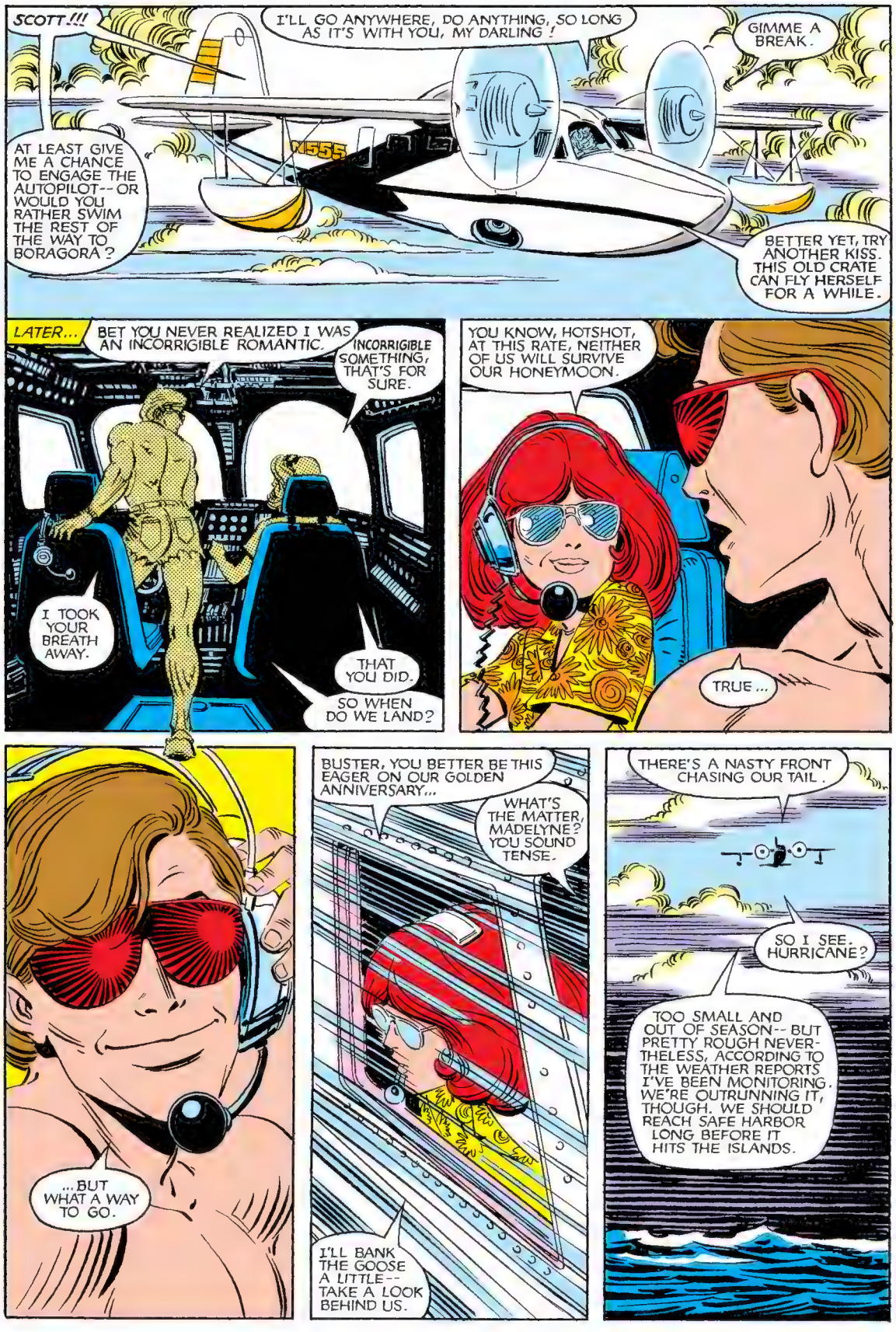
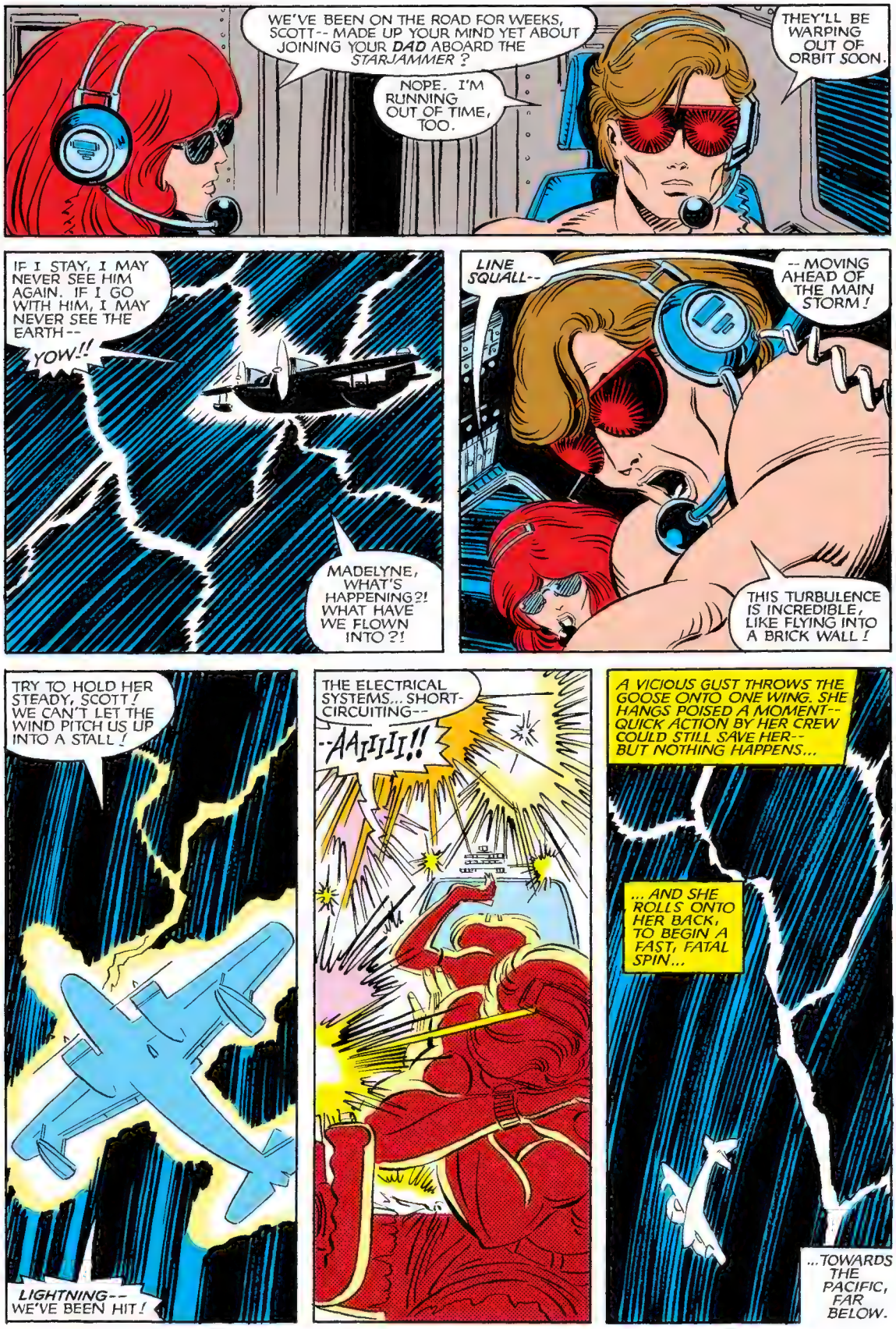
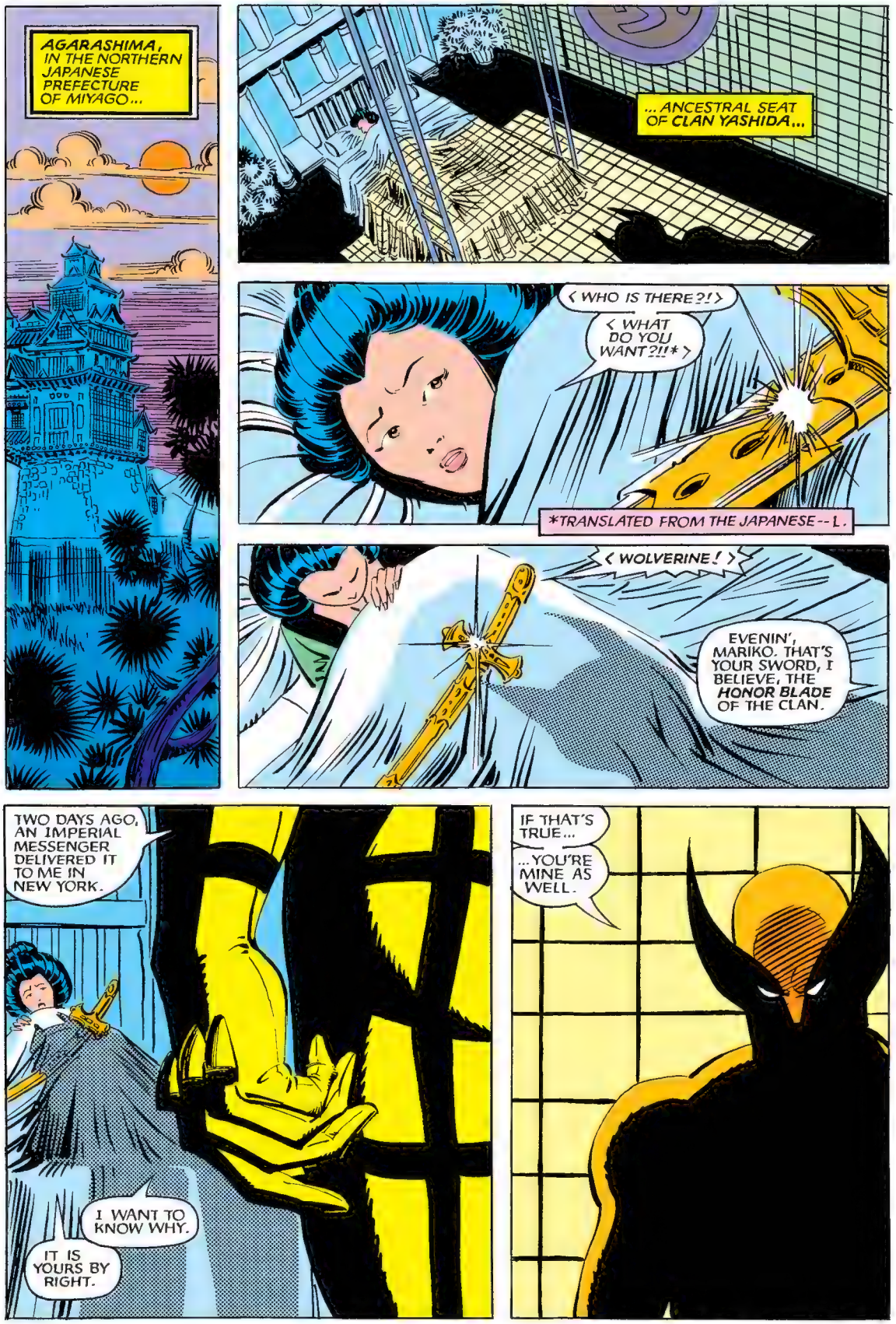
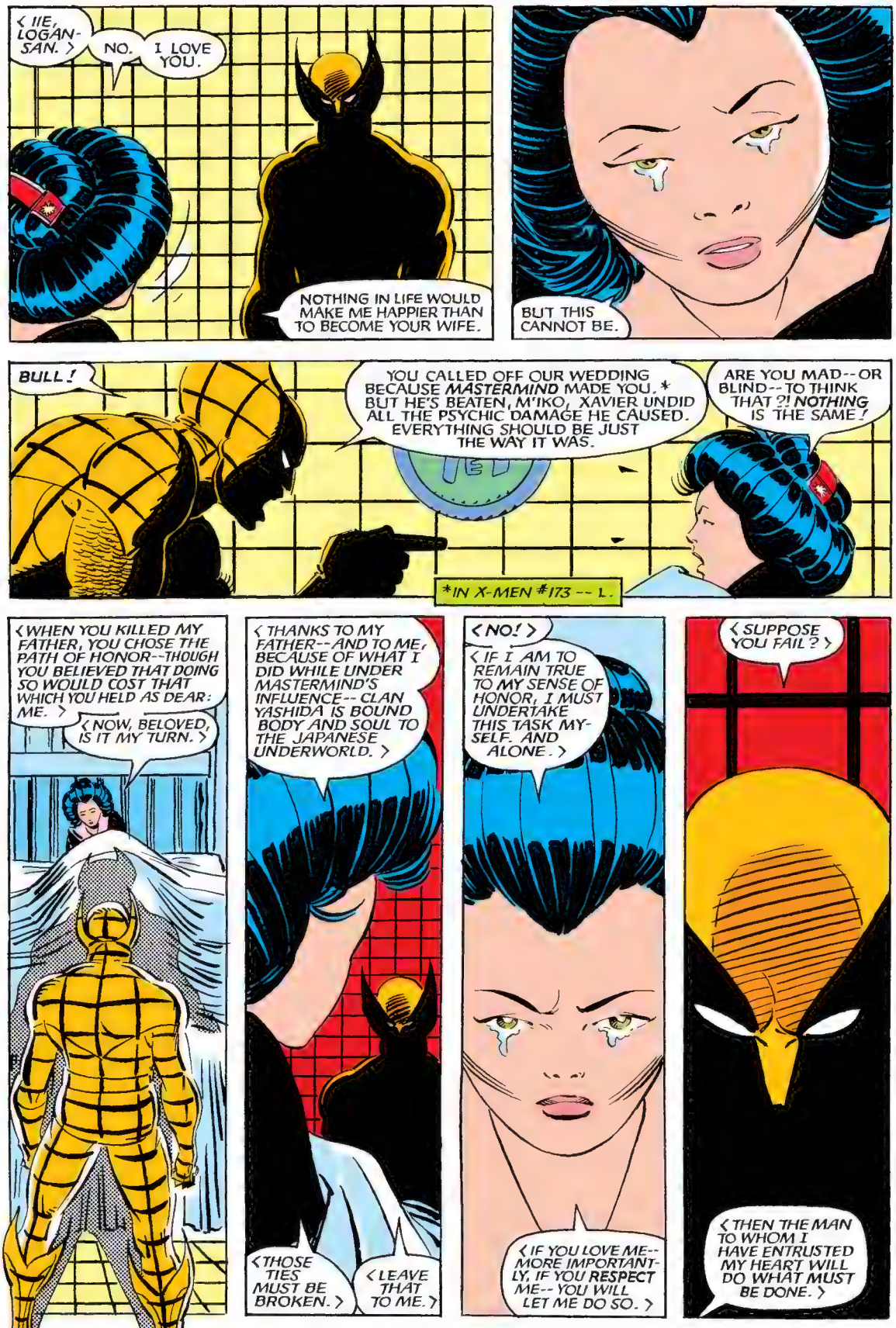
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
J.R.JR.

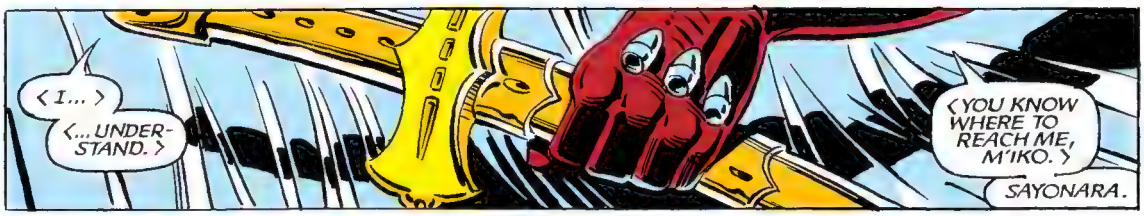

Stan Lee PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN!
CHRIS CLAREMONT WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. PENCILER
BOB WIACEK INKER
GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST
TOM ORZECHOWSKI LETTERER
LOUISE JONES EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DECISIONS
SOMEWHERE OVER THE SOUTH PACIFIC...
MMNNNPGH!?!
TOP O' THE MORNIN' TO YOU, MRS. SUMMERS!

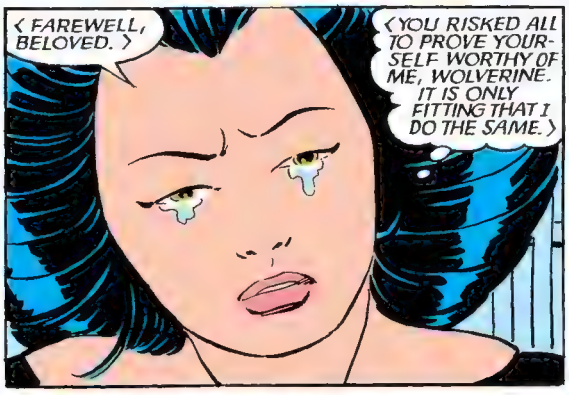

SCOTT!!!
I'LL GO ANYWHERE, DO ANYTHING, SO LONG AS IT'S WITH YOU, MY DARLING!
GIMME A BREAK.
AT LEAST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO ENGAGE THE AUTOPILOT-- OR WOULD YOU RATHER SWIM THE REST OF THE WAY TO BORAGORA?
N555
BETTER YET, TRY ANOTHER KISS. THIS OLD CRATE CAN FLY HERSELF FOR A WHILE.
LATER...
BET YOU NEVER REALIZED I WAS AN INCORRIGIBLE ROMANTIC.
INCORRIGIBLE SOMETHING, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I TOOK YOUR BREATH AWAY.
THAT YOU DID.
SO WHEN DO WE LAND?
YOU KNOW, HOTSHOT, AT THIS RATE, NEITHER OF US WILL SURVIVE OUR HONEYMOON.
TRUE...
...BUT WHAT A WAY TO GO.
BUSTER, YOU BETTER BE THIS EAGER ON OUR GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MADELYNE? YOU SOUND TENSE.
I'LL BANK THE GOOSE A LITTLE-- TAKE A LOOK BEHIND US.
THERE'S A NASTY FRONT CHASING OUR TAIL.
SO I SEE. HURRICANE?
TOO SMALL AND OUT OF SEASON-- BUT PRETTY ROUGH NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO THE WEATHER REPORTS I'VE BEEN MONITORING. WE'RE OUTRUNNING IT, THOUGH. WE SHOULD REACH SAFE HARBOR LONG BEFORE IT HITS THE ISLANDS.


WE'VE BEEN ON THE ROAD FOR WEEKS, SCOTT-- MADE UP YOUR MIND YET ABOUT JOINING YOUR DAD ABOARD THE STARJAMMER ?
NOPE. I'M RUNNING OUT OF TIME, TOO.
THEY'LL BE WARPING OUT OF ORBIT SOON.
IF I STAY, I MAY NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN. IF I GO WITH HIM, I MAY NEVER SEE THE EARTH--
YOW!!
MADELYNE, WHAT'S HAPPENING?! WHAT HAVE WE FLOWN INTO?!
LINE SQUALL--
-- MOVING AHEAD OF THE MAIN STORM!
THIS TURBULENCE IS INCREDIBLE, LIKE FLYING INTO A BRICK WALL!
TRY TO HOLD HER STEADY, SCOTT! WE CAN'T LET THE WIND PITCH US UP INTO A STALL!
LIGHTNING-- WE'VE BEEN HIT!
THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS... SHORT-CIRCUITING--
--AAIIII!!
A VICIOUS GUST THROWS THE GOOSE ONTO ONE WING. SHE HANGS POISED A MOMENT-- QUICK ACTION BY HER CREW COULD STILL SAVE HER-- BUT NOTHING HAPPENS...
... AND SHE ROLLS ONTO HER BACK, TO BEGIN A FAST, FATAL SPIN...
...TOWARDS THE PACIFIC, FAR BELOW.


AGARASHIMA, IN THE NORTHERN JAPANESE PREFECTURE OF MIYAGO...
...ANCESTRAL SEAT OF CLAN YASHIDA...
< WHO IS THERE?! >
< WHAT DO YOU WANT?!!* >
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE--L.
< WOLVERINE! >
EVENIN', MARIKO. THAT'S YOUR SWORD, I BELIEVE, THE HONOR BLADE OF THE CLAN.
TWO DAYS AGO, AN IMPERIAL MESSENGER DELIVERED IT TO ME IN NEW YORK.
I WANT TO KNOW WHY.
IT IS YOURS BY RIGHT.
IF THAT'S TRUE...
...YOU'RE MINE AS WELL.

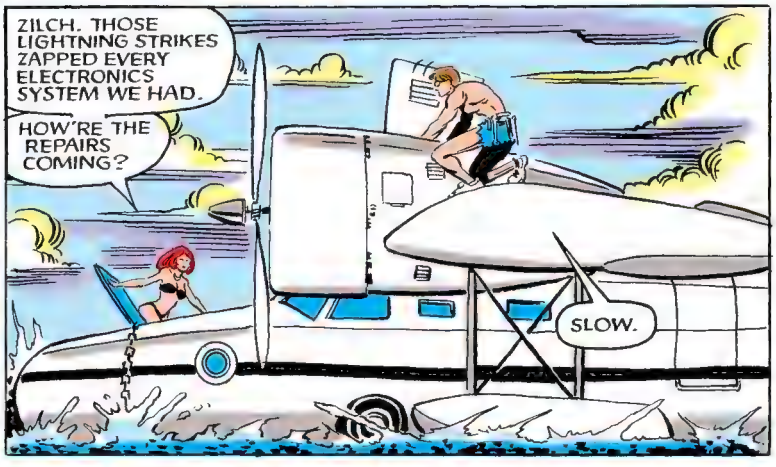

〈 IIE, LOGAN-SAN. 〉
NO. I LOVE YOU.
NOTHING IN LIFE WOULD MAKE ME HAPPIER THAN TO BECOME YOUR WIFE.
BUT THIS CANNOT BE.
BULL!
YOU CALLED OFF OUR WEDDING BECAUSE MASTERMIND MADE YOU. * BUT HE'S BEATEN, M'IKO, XAVIER UNDID ALL THE PSYCHIC DAMAGE HE CAUSED. EVERYTHING SHOULD BE JUST THE WAY IT WAS.
ARE YOU MAD--OR BLIND--TO THINK THAT?! NOTHING IS THE SAME!
*IN X-MEN #173 -- L.
〈 WHEN YOU KILLED MY FATHER, YOU CHOSE THE PATH OF HONOR--THOUGH YOU BELIEVED THAT DOING SO WOULD COST THAT WHICH YOU HELD AS DEAR: ME. 〉
〈 NOW, BELOVED, IS IT MY TURN. 〉
〈 THANKS TO MY FATHER--AND TO ME, BECAUSE OF WHAT I DID WHILE UNDER MASTERMIND'S INFLUENCE-- CLAN YASHIDA IS BOUND BODY AND SOUL TO THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD. 〉
〈 THOSE TIES MUST BE BROKEN. 〉
〈 LEAVE THAT TO ME. 〉
〈 NO! 〉
〈 IF I AM TO REMAIN TRUE TO MY SENSE OF HONOR, I MUST UNDERTAKE THIS TASK MYSELF. AND ALONE. 〉
〈 IF YOU LOVE ME--MORE IMPORTANTLY, IF YOU RESPECT ME-- YOU WILL LET ME DO SO. 〉
〈 SUPPOSE YOU FAIL? 〉
〈 THEN THE MAN TO WHOM I HAVE ENTRUSTED MY HEART WILL DO WHAT MUST BE DONE. 〉

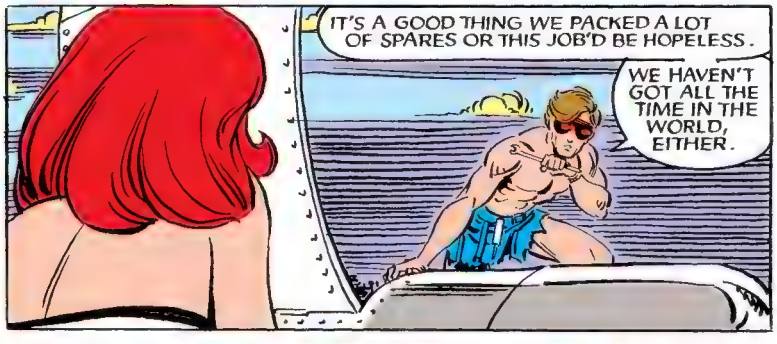

〈I... 〉
〈...UNDER-STAND.〉
〈YOU KNOW WHERE TO REACH ME, M'IKO.〉
SAYONARA.

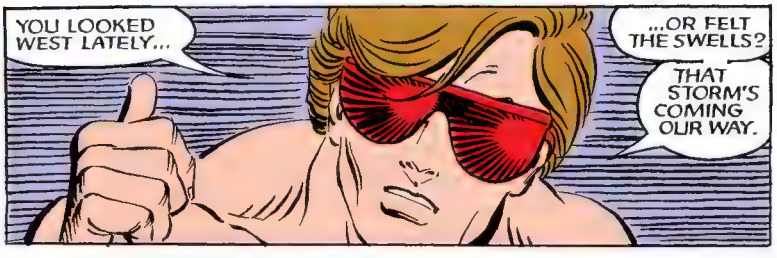

〈FAREWELL, BELOVED.〉
〈YOU RISKED ALL TO PROVE YOUR-SELF WORTHY OF ME, WOLVERINE. IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT I DO THE SAME.〉

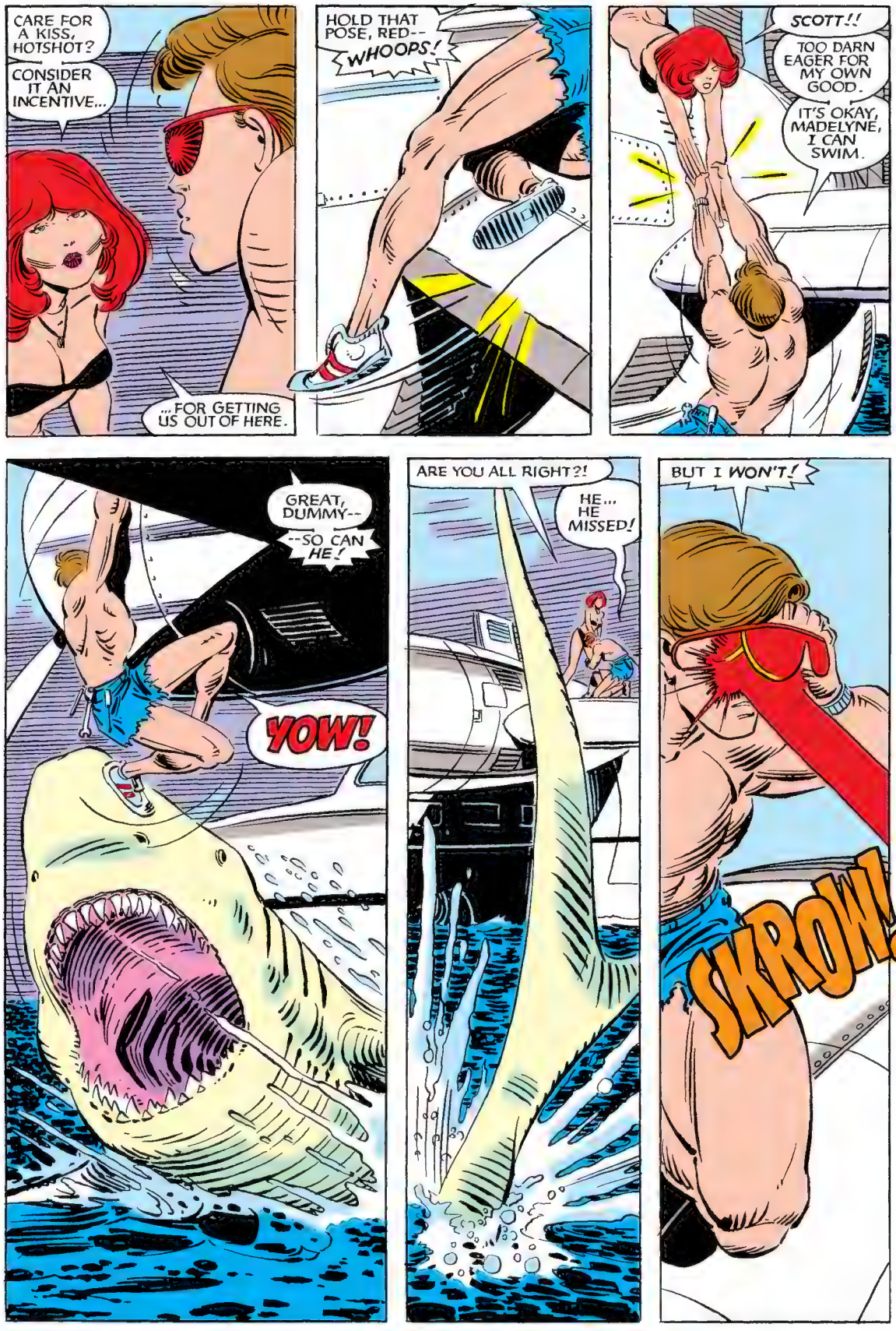
〈I DO NOT WANT TO DIE--NOR TO SEE OTHERS SLAIN IN MY NAME. BUT I AM LORD OF CLAN YASHIDA.〉
〈I CANNOT SHIRK THAT RESPONSIBILITY --NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.〉

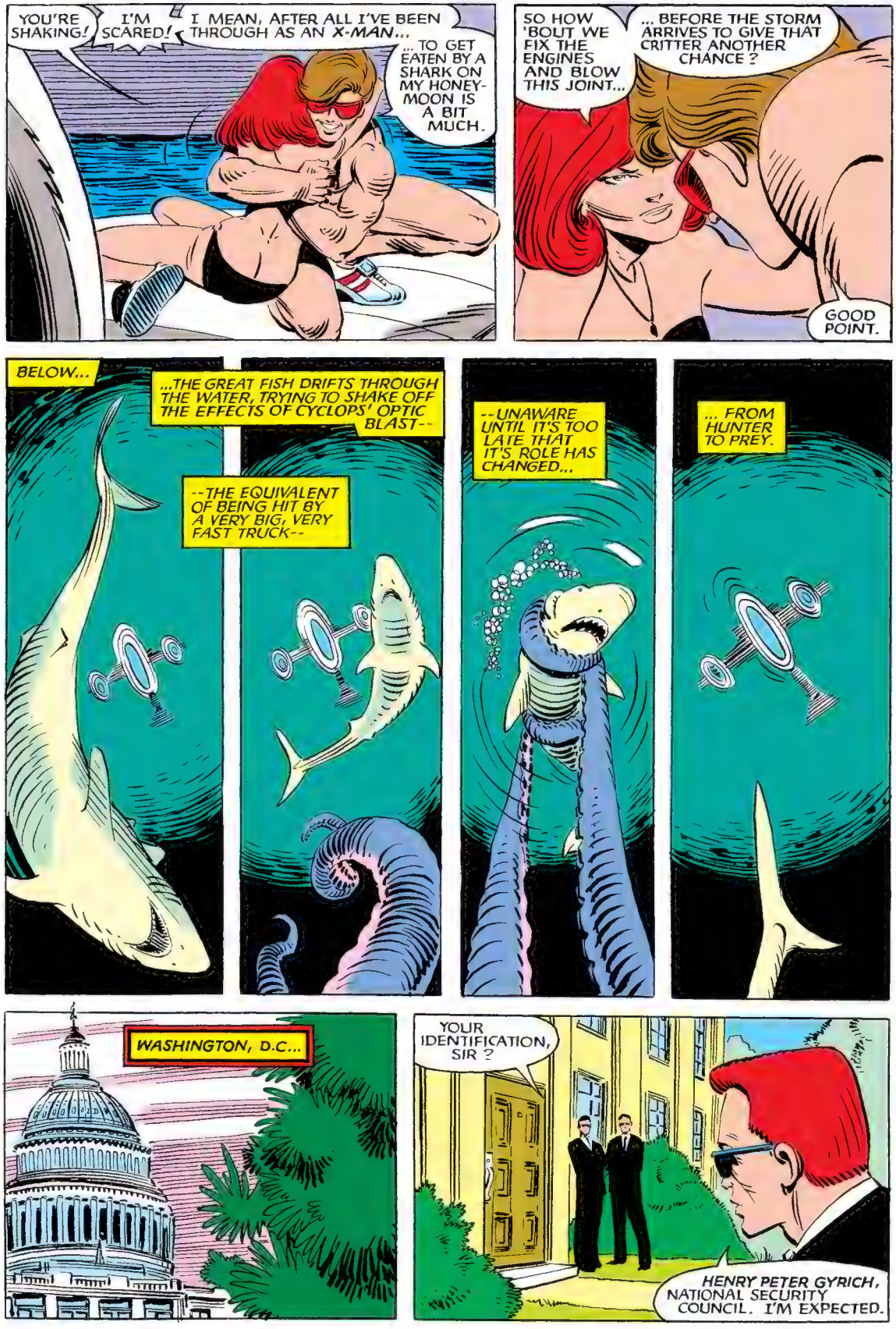
SOMEWHERE IN MID-PACIFIC...
ANY LUCK WITH THE RADIO?

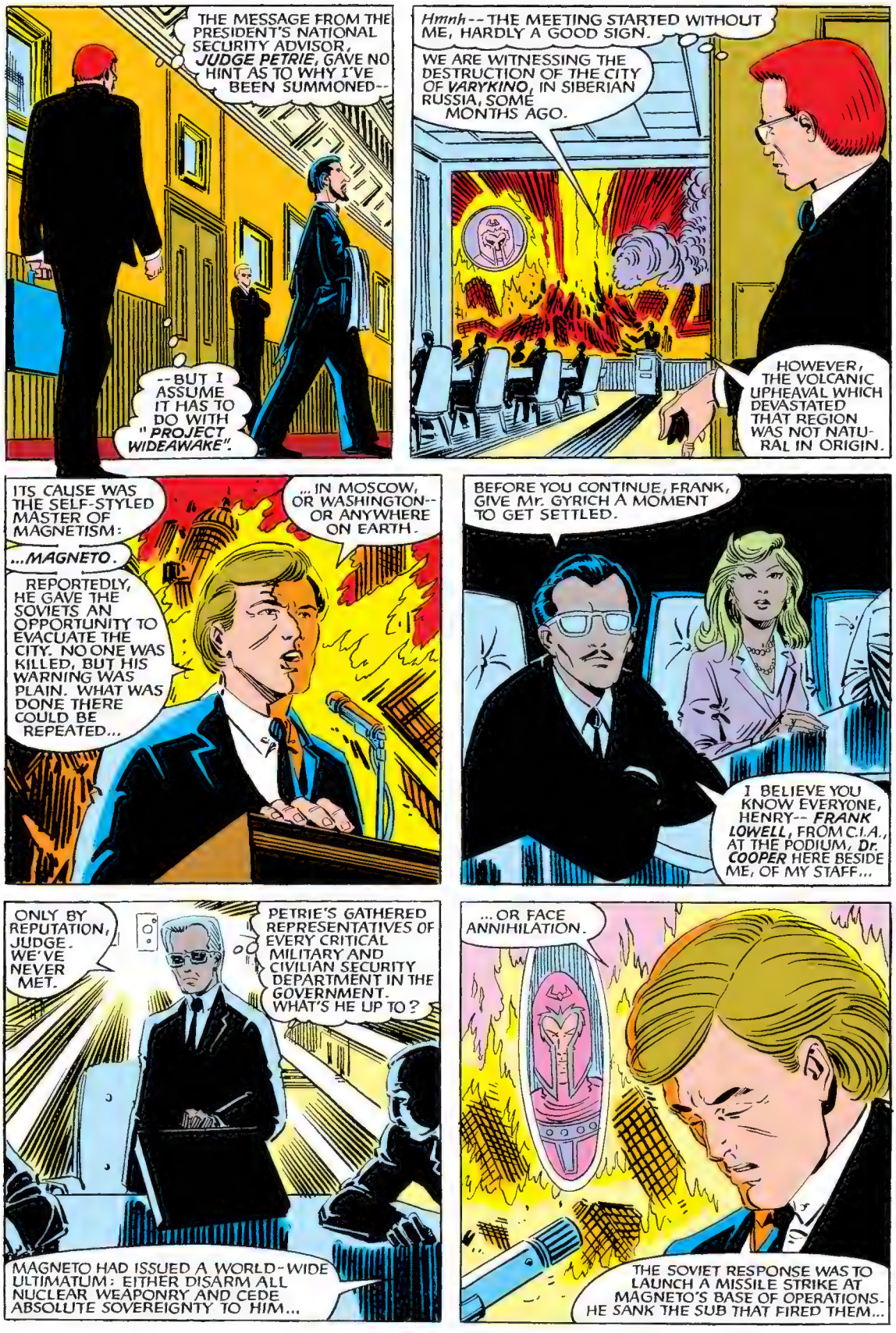

ZILCH. THOSE LIGHTNING STRIKES ZAPPED EVERY ELECTRONICS SYSTEM WE HAD.
HOW'RE THE REPAIRS COMING?
SLOW.

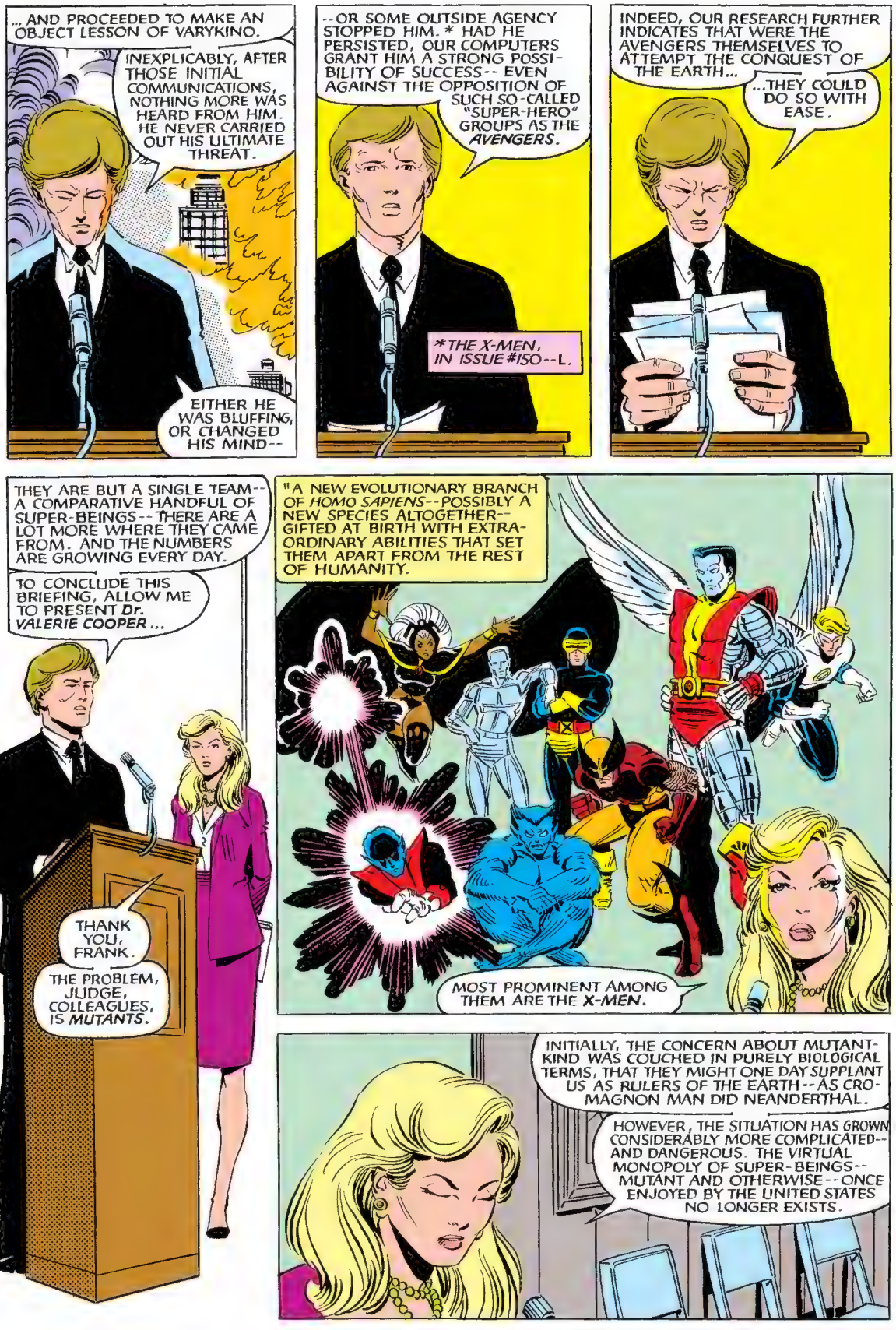

IT'S A GOOD THING WE PACKED A LOT OF SPARES OR THIS JOB'D BE HOPELESS.
WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, EITHER.

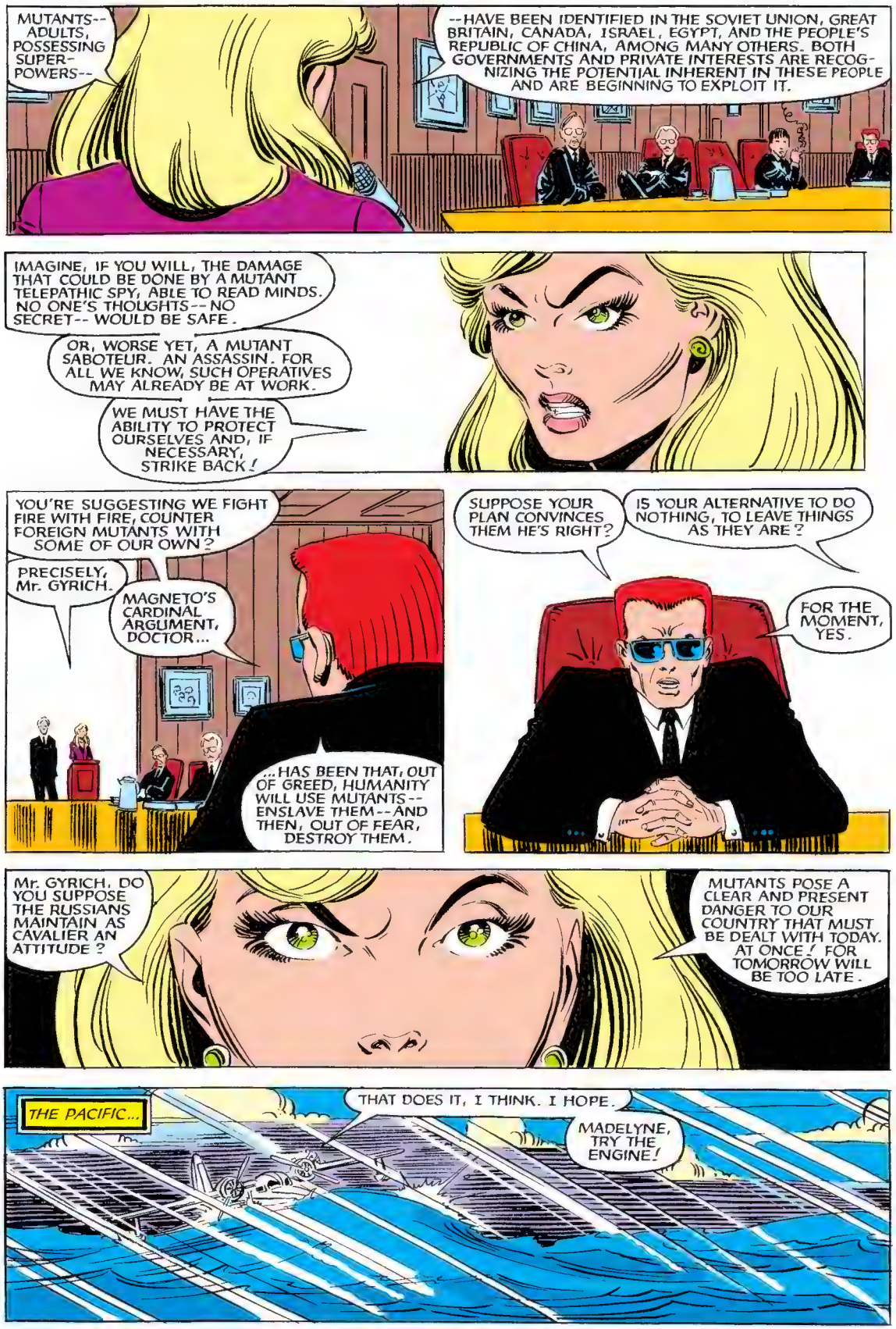

YOU LOOKED WEST LATELY...
...OR FELT THE SWELLS?
THAT STORM'S COMING OUR WAY.

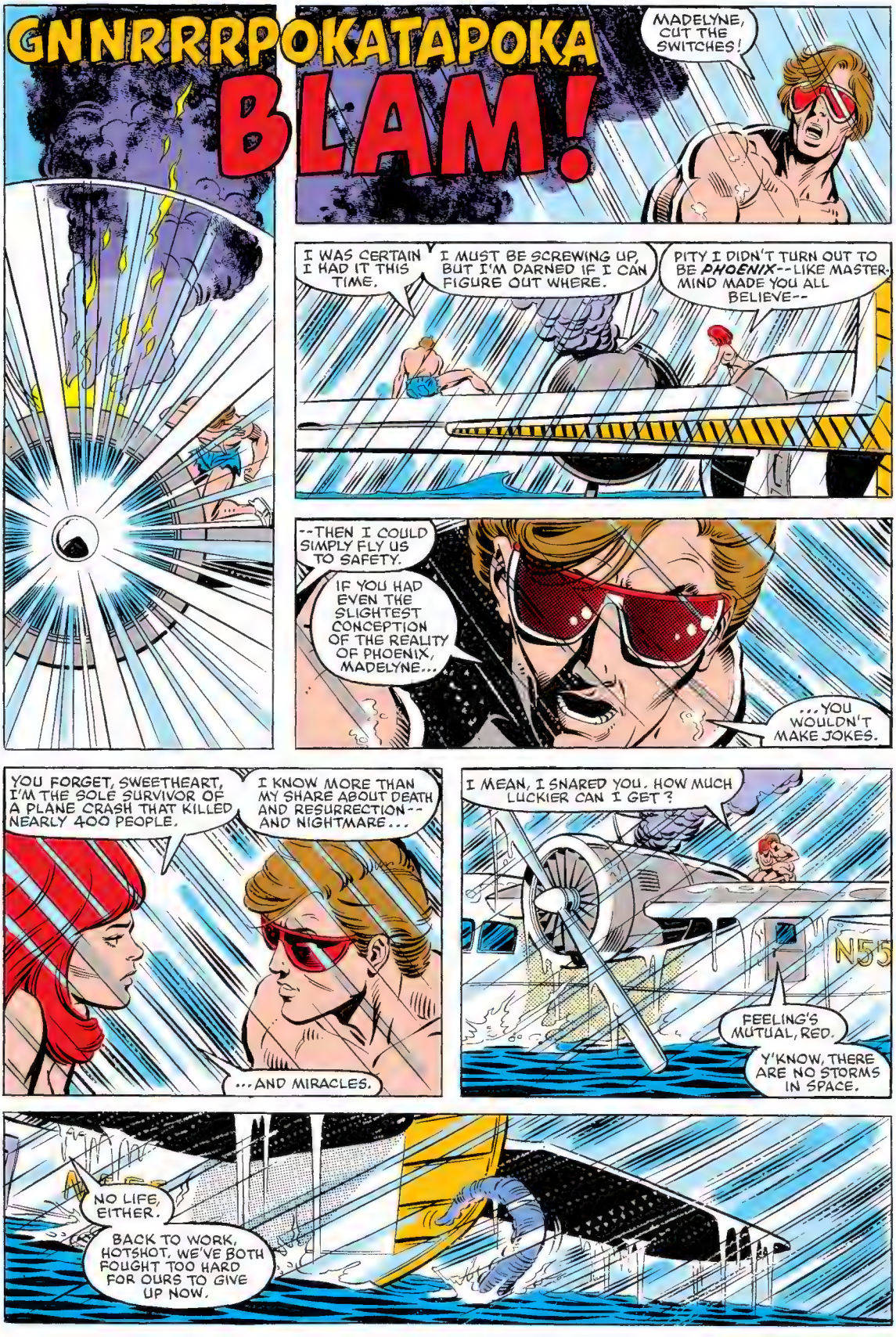

CARE FOR A KISS, HOTSHOT?
CONSIDER IT AN INCENTIVE...
...FOR GETTING US OUT OF HERE.
HOLD THAT POSE, RED--
WHOOPS!
SCOTT!!
TOO DARN EAGER FOR MY OWN GOOD.
IT'S OKAY, MADELYNE, I CAN SWIM.
GREAT, DUMMY--
--SO CAN HE!
YOW!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
HE... HE MISSED!
BUT I WON'T!
SKROW!


YOU'RE SHAKING!
I'M SCARED!
I MEAN, AFTER ALL I'VE BEEN THROUGH AS AN X-MAN...
... TO GET EATEN BY A SHARK ON MY HONEY-MOON IS A BIT MUCH.
SO HOW 'BOUT WE FIX THE ENGINES AND BLOW THIS JOINT...
... BEFORE THE STORM ARRIVES TO GIVE THAT CRITTER ANOTHER CHANCE?
GOOD POINT.
BELOW...
...THE GREAT FISH DRIFTS THROUGH THE WATER, TRYING TO SHAKE OFF THE EFFECTS OF CYCLOPS' OPTIC BLAST--
--THE EQUIVALENT OF BEING HIT BY A VERY BIG, VERY FAST TRUCK--
--UNAWARE UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE THAT IT'S ROLE HAS CHANGED...
... FROM HUNTER TO PREY.
WASHINGTON, D.C...
YOUR IDENTIFICATION, SIR?
HENRY PETER GYRICH, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. I'M EXPECTED.

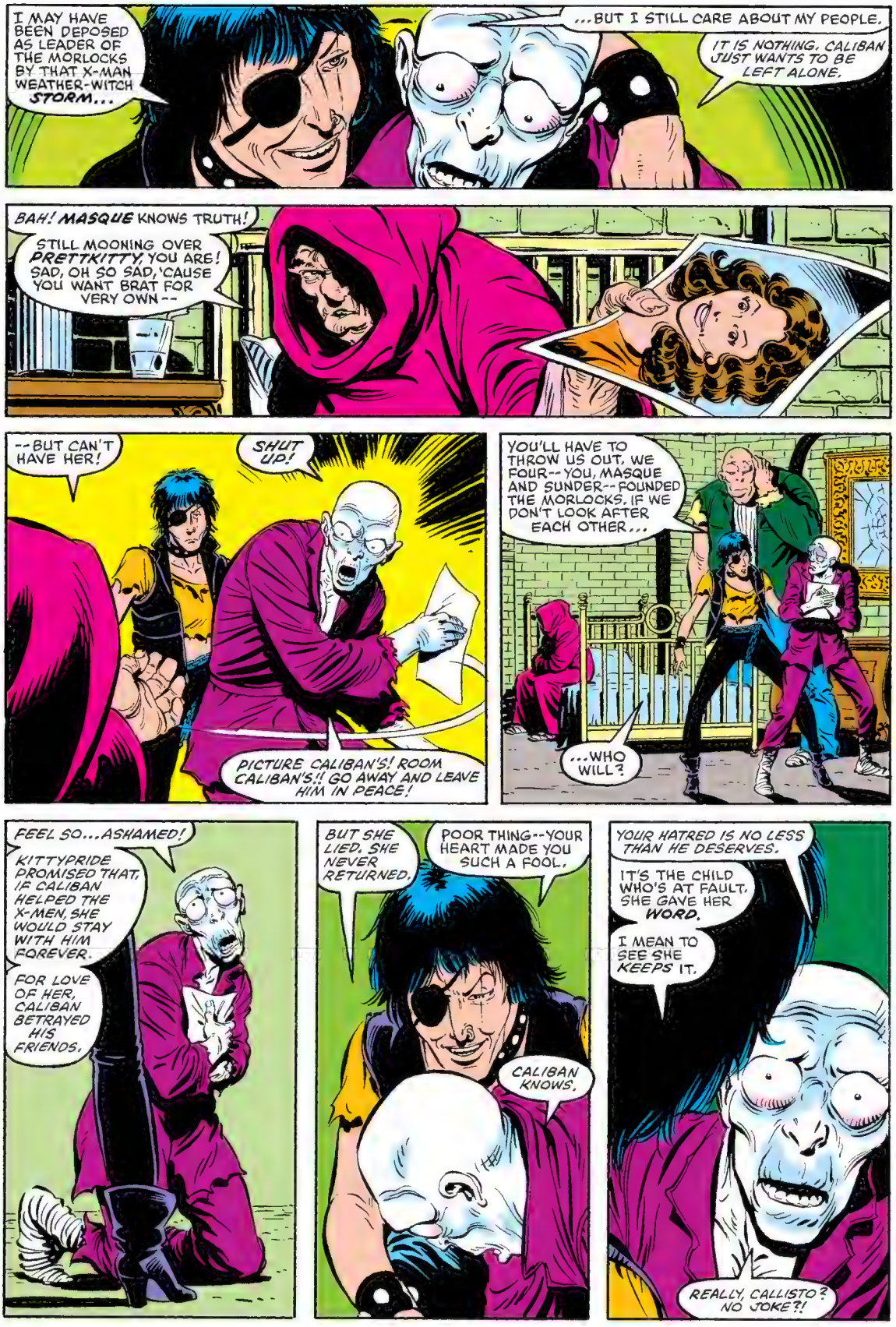

THE MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, JUDGE PETRIE, GAVE NO HINT AS TO WHY I'VE BEEN SUMMONED--
--BUT I ASSUME IT HAS TO DO WITH "PROJECT WIDEAWAKE".
Hmnh--THE MEETING STARTED WITHOUT ME, HARDLY A GOOD SIGN.
WE ARE WITNESSING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF VARYKINO, IN SIBERIAN RUSSIA, SOME MONTHS AGO.
HOWEVER, THE VOLCANIC UPHEAVAL WHICH DEVASTATED THAT REGION WAS NOT NATURAL IN ORIGIN.
ITS CAUSE WAS THE SELF-STYLED MASTER OF MAGNETISM:
...MAGNETO.
REPORTEDLY, HE GAVE THE SOVIETS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVACUATE THE CITY. NO ONE WAS KILLED, BUT HIS WARNING WAS PLAIN. WHAT WAS DONE THERE COULD BE REPEATED...
...IN MOSCOW, OR WASHINGTON--OR ANYWHERE ON EARTH.
BEFORE YOU CONTINUE, FRANK, GIVE Mr. GYRICH A MOMENT TO GET SETTLED.
I BELIEVE YOU KNOW EVERYONE, HENRY-- FRANK LOWELL, FROM C.I.A., AT THE PODIUM, Dr. COOPER HERE BESIDE ME, OF MY STAFF...
ONLY BY REPUTATION, JUDGE. WE'VE NEVER MET.
PETRIE'S GATHERED REPRESENTATIVES OF EVERY CRITICAL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SECURITY DEPARTMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT. WHAT'S HE UP TO?
MAGNETO HAD ISSUED A WORLD-WIDE ULTIMATUM: EITHER DISARM ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONRY AND CEDE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY TO HIM...
...OR FACE ANNIHILATION.
THE SOVIET RESPONSE WAS TO LAUNCH A MISSILE STRIKE AT MAGNETO'S BASE OF OPERATIONS. HE SANK THE SUB THAT FIRED THEM...

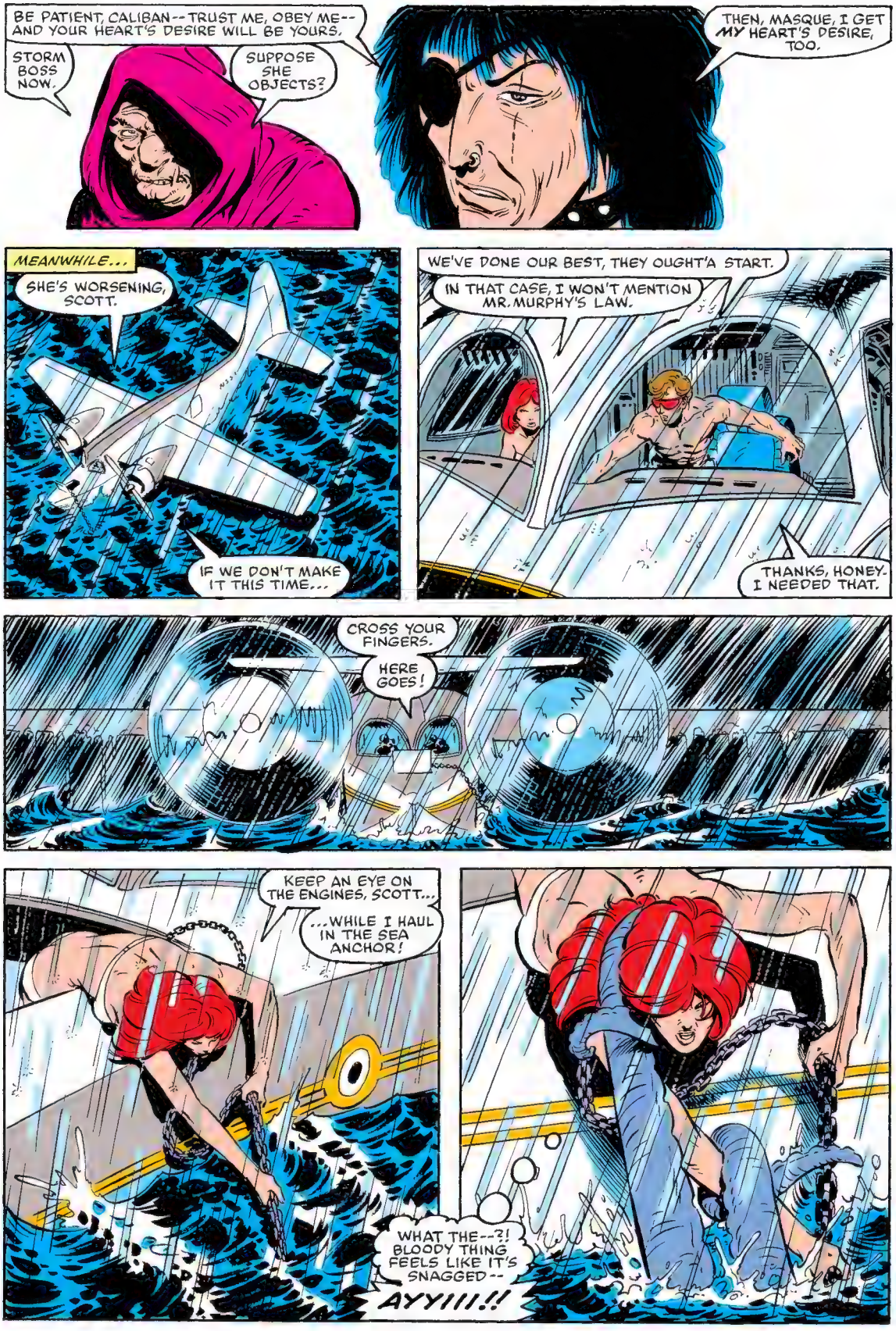

... AND PROCEEDED TO MAKE AN OBJECT LESSON OF VARYKINO.
INEXPLICABLY, AFTER THOSE INITIAL COMMUNICATIONS, NOTHING MORE WAS HEARD FROM HIM. HE NEVER CARRIED OUT HIS ULTIMATE THREAT.
EITHER HE WAS BLUFFING, OR CHANGED HIS MIND--
--OR SOME OUTSIDE AGENCY STOPPED HIM. * HAD HE PERSISTED, OUR COMPUTERS GRANT HIM A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS-- EVEN AGAINST THE OPPOSITION OF SUCH SO-CALLED "SUPER-HERO" GROUPS AS THE AVENGERS.
*THE X-MEN, IN ISSUE #150--L.
INDEED, OUR RESEARCH FURTHER INDICATES THAT WERE THE AVENGERS THEMSELVES TO ATTEMPT THE CONQUEST OF THE EARTH...
...THEY COULD DO SO WITH EASE.
THEY ARE BUT A SINGLE TEAM-- A COMPARATIVE HANDFUL OF SUPER-BEINGS-- THERE ARE A LOT MORE WHERE THEY CAME FROM. AND THE NUMBERS ARE GROWING EVERY DAY.
TO CONCLUDE THIS BRIEFING, ALLOW ME TO PRESENT Dr. VALERIE COOPER...
THANK YOU, FRANK.
THE PROBLEM, JUDGE, COLLEAGUES, IS MUTANTS.
"A NEW EVOLUTIONARY BRANCH OF HOMO SAPIENS--POSSIBLY A NEW SPECIES ALTOGETHER-- GIFTED AT BIRTH WITH EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES THAT SET THEM APART FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY.
MOST PROMINENT AMONG THEM ARE THE X-MEN.
INITIALLY, THE CONCERN ABOUT MUTANTKIND WAS COUCHED IN PURELY BIOLOGICAL TERMS, THAT THEY MIGHT ONE DAY SUPPLANT US AS RULERS OF THE EARTH--AS CRO-MAGNON MAN DID NEANDERTHAL.
HOWEVER, THE SITUATION HAS GROWN CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPLICATED-- AND DANGEROUS. THE VIRTUAL MONOPOLY OF SUPER-BEINGS-- MUTANT AND OTHERWISE--ONCE ENJOYED BY THE UNITED STATES NO LONGER EXISTS.

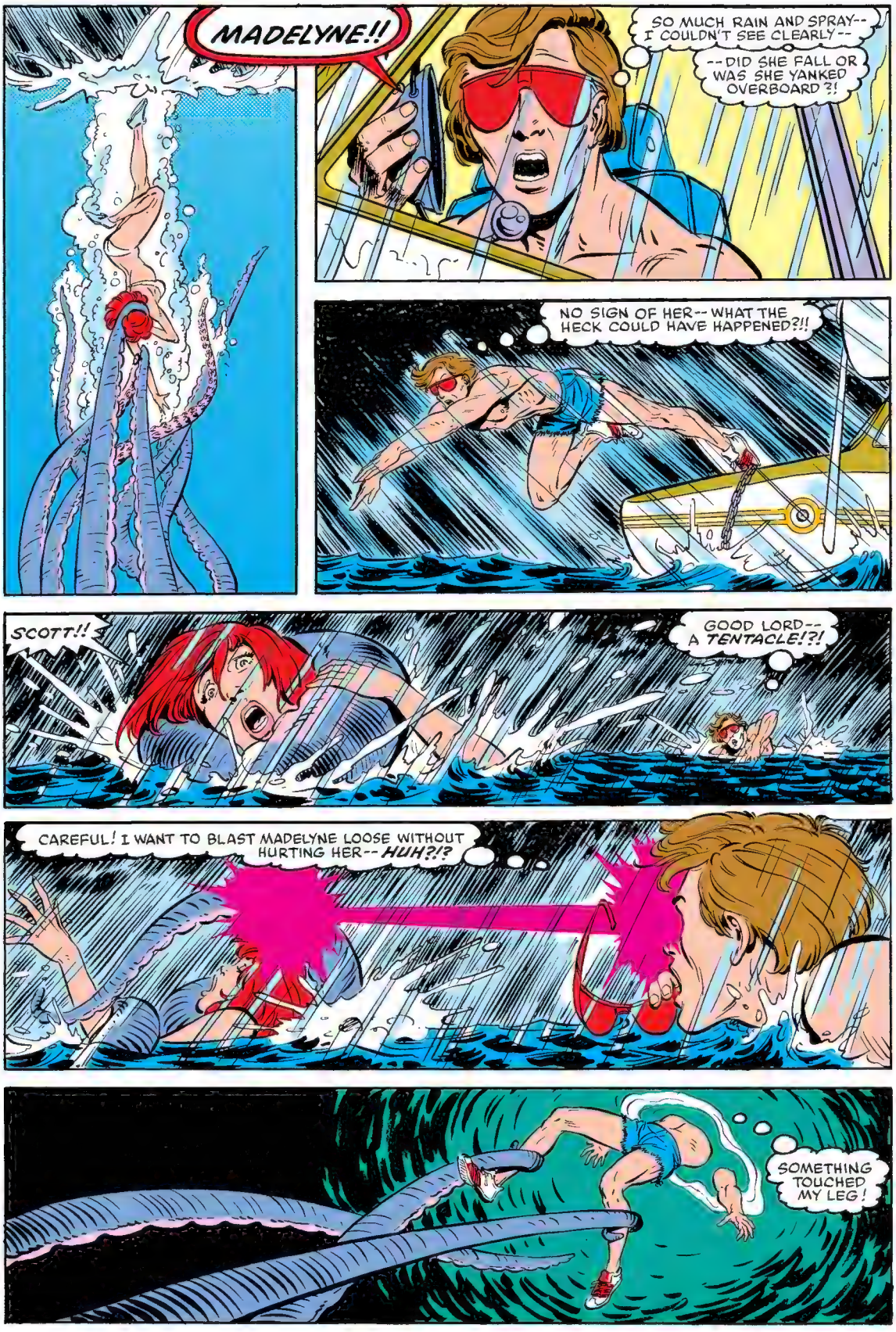

MUTANTS--ADULTS, POSSESSING SUPER-POWERS--
--HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE SOVIET UNION, GREAT BRITAIN, CANADA, ISRAEL, EGYPT, AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, AMONG MANY OTHERS. BOTH GOVERNMENTS AND PRIVATE INTERESTS ARE RECOGNIZING THE POTENTIAL INHERENT IN THESE PEOPLE AND ARE BEGINNING TO EXPLOIT IT.
IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, THE DAMAGE THAT COULD BE DONE BY A MUTANT TELEPATHIC SPY, ABLE TO READ MINDS. NO ONE'S THOUGHTS--NO SECRET--WOULD BE SAFE.
OR, WORSE YET, A MUTANT SABOTEUR. AN ASSASSIN. FOR ALL WE KNOW, SUCH OPERATIVES MAY ALREADY BE AT WORK.
WE MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND, IF NECESSARY, STRIKE BACK!
YOU'RE SUGGESTING WE FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE, COUNTER FOREIGN MUTANTS WITH SOME OF OUR OWN?
PRECISELY, Mr. GYRICH.
MAGNETO'S CARDINAL ARGUMENT, DOCTOR...
...HAS BEEN THAT, OUT OF GREED, HUMANITY WILL USE MUTANTS--ENSLAVE THEM--AND THEN, OUT OF FEAR, DESTROY THEM.
SUPPOSE YOUR PLAN CONVINCES THEM HE'S RIGHT?
IS YOUR ALTERNATIVE TO DO NOTHING, TO LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE?
FOR THE MOMENT, YES.
Mr. GYRICH, DO YOU SUPPOSE THE RUSSIANS MAINTAIN AS CAVALIER AN ATTITUDE?
MUTANTS POSE A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER TO OUR COUNTRY THAT MUST BE DEALT WITH TODAY. AT ONCE! FOR TOMORROW WILL BE TOO LATE.
THE PACIFIC...
THAT DOES IT, I THINK. I HOPE.
MADELYNE, TRY THE ENGINE!

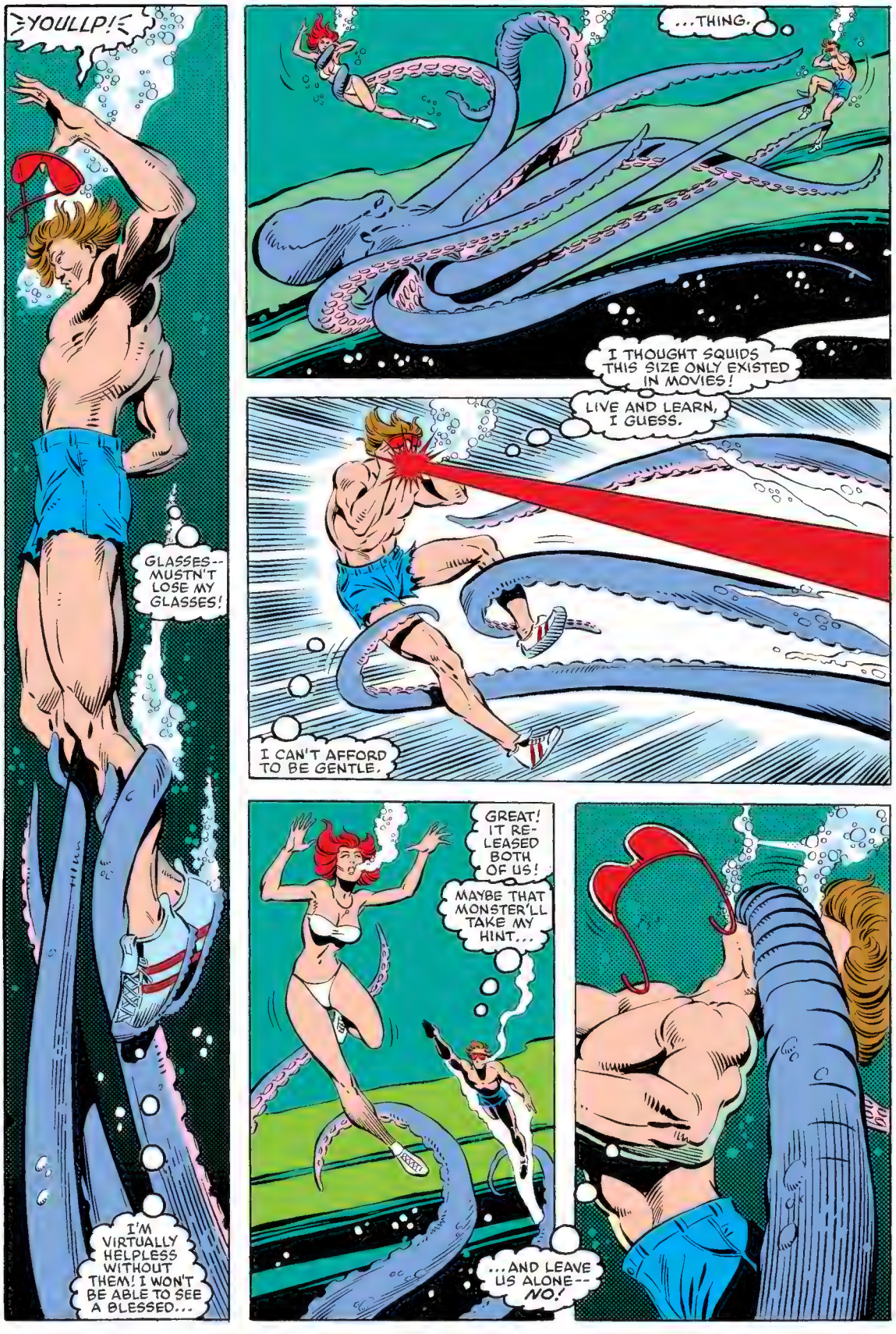

GNNRRRPOKATAPOKA
BLAM!
MADELYNE, CUT THE SWITCHES!
I WAS CERTAIN I HAD IT THIS TIME.
I MUST BE SCREWING UP, BUT I'M DARNED IF I CAN FIGURE OUT WHERE.
PITY I DIDN'T TURN OUT TO BE PHOENIX--LIKE MASTERMIND MADE YOU ALL BELIEVE--
--THEN I COULD SIMPLY FLY US TO SAFETY.
IF YOU HAD EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CONCEPTION OF THE REALITY OF PHOENIX, MADELYNE...
...YOU WOULDN'T MAKE JOKES.
YOU FORGET, SWEETHEART, I'M THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A PLANE CRASH THAT KILLED NEARLY 400 PEOPLE.
I KNOW MORE THAN MY SHARE ABOUT DEATH AND RESURRECTION--AND NIGHTMARE...
...AND MIRACLES.
I MEAN, I SNARED YOU. HOW MUCH LUCKIER CAN I GET?
N55
FEELING'S MUTUAL, RED.
Y'KNOW, THERE ARE NO STORMS IN SPACE.
NO LIFE, EITHER.
BACK TO WORK, HOTSHOT. WE'VE BOTH FOUGHT TOO HARD FOR OURS TO GIVE UP NOW.

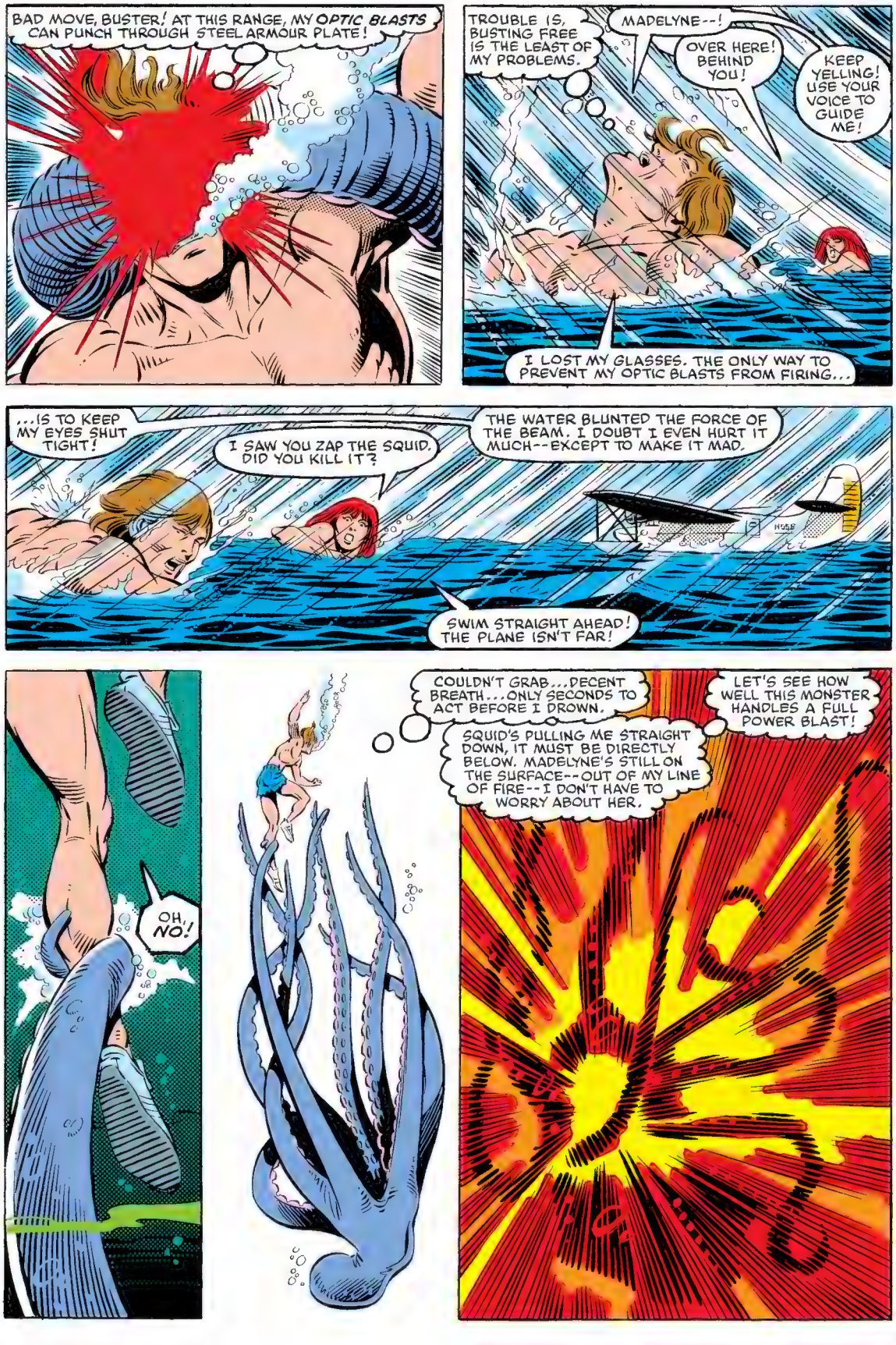
NEW YORK CITY...
EVERYONE THINKS OF IT AS REACHING FOR THE STARS, SKY-SCRAPERS TURNING ITS STREETS INTO MAN-MADE CANYONS.
THEY FORGET IT REACHES THE OTHER WAY, TOO.
ONE WAY
W 53
NO COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC
WALK
A THOUSAND FEET BELOW MANHATTAN IS WHERE THE MORLOCKS LIVE.
LIKE THE X-MEN, THEY ARE MUTANTS -- BUT THEY CARE NOTHING FOR HUMANITY. THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES OUTCASTS AND OUTLAWS, AND THESE TUNNELS ARE THEIR DOMAIN.
STRANGERS ENTER AT THEIR PERIL.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!!
CALIBAN, IS THAT ANY WAY TO GREET OLD FRIENDS?
SPACE IS CALIBAN'S! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TRESPASS!
GET OUT!
WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN AGES. WE'RE CONCERNED, THAT'S ALL...
...WONDERING PERHAPS IF ANYTHING'S WRONG?

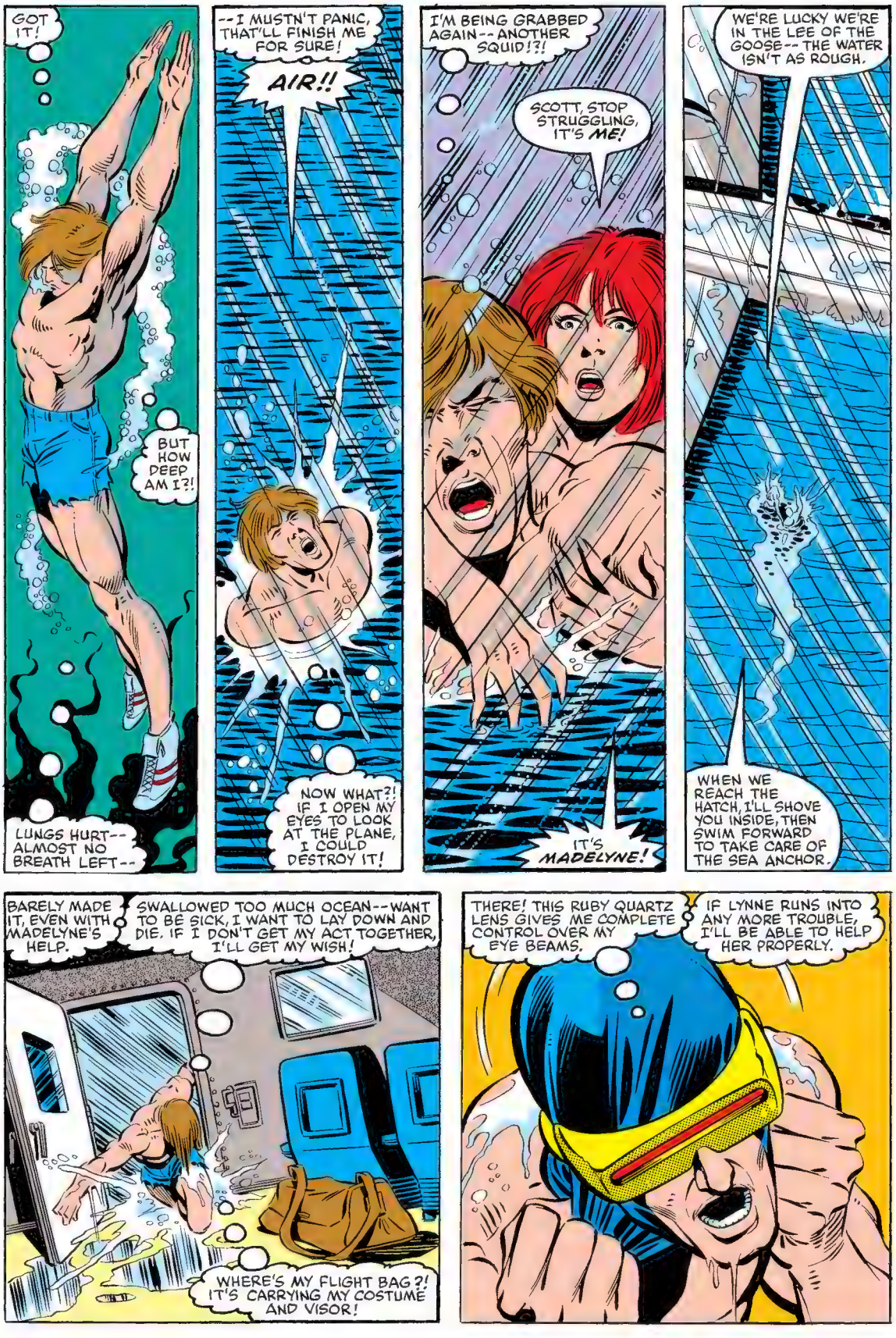

I MAY HAVE BEEN DEPOSED AS LEADER OF THE MORLOCKS BY THAT X-MAN WEATHER-WITCH STORM...
...BUT I STILL CARE ABOUT MY PEOPLE.
IT IS NOTHING. CALIBAN JUST WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE.
BAH! MASQUE KNOWS TRUTH!
STILL MOONING OVER PRETTKITTY, YOU ARE! SAD, OH SO SAD, 'CAUSE YOU WANT BRAT FOR VERY OWN--
--BUT CAN'T HAVE HER!
SHUT UP!
PICTURE CALIBAN'S! ROOM CALIBAN'S!! GO AWAY AND LEAVE HIM IN PEACE!
YOU'LL HAVE TO THROW US OUT. WE FOUR--YOU, MASQUE AND SUNDER--FOUNDED THE MORLOCKS. IF WE DON'T LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER...
...WHO WILL?
FEEL SO...ASHAMED!
KITTYPRIDE PROMISED THAT, IF CALIBAN HELPED THE X-MEN, SHE WOULD STAY WITH HIM FOREVER.
FOR LOVE OF HER, CALIBAN BETRAYED HIS FRIENDS.
BUT SHE LIED. SHE NEVER RETURNED.
POOR THING--YOUR HEART MADE YOU SUCH A FOOL.
CALIBAN KNOWS.
YOUR HATRED IS NO LESS THAN HE DESERVES.
IT'S THE CHILD WHO'S AT FAULT. SHE GAVE HER WORD.
I MEAN TO SEE SHE KEEPS IT.
REALLY, CALLISTO? NO JOKE?!

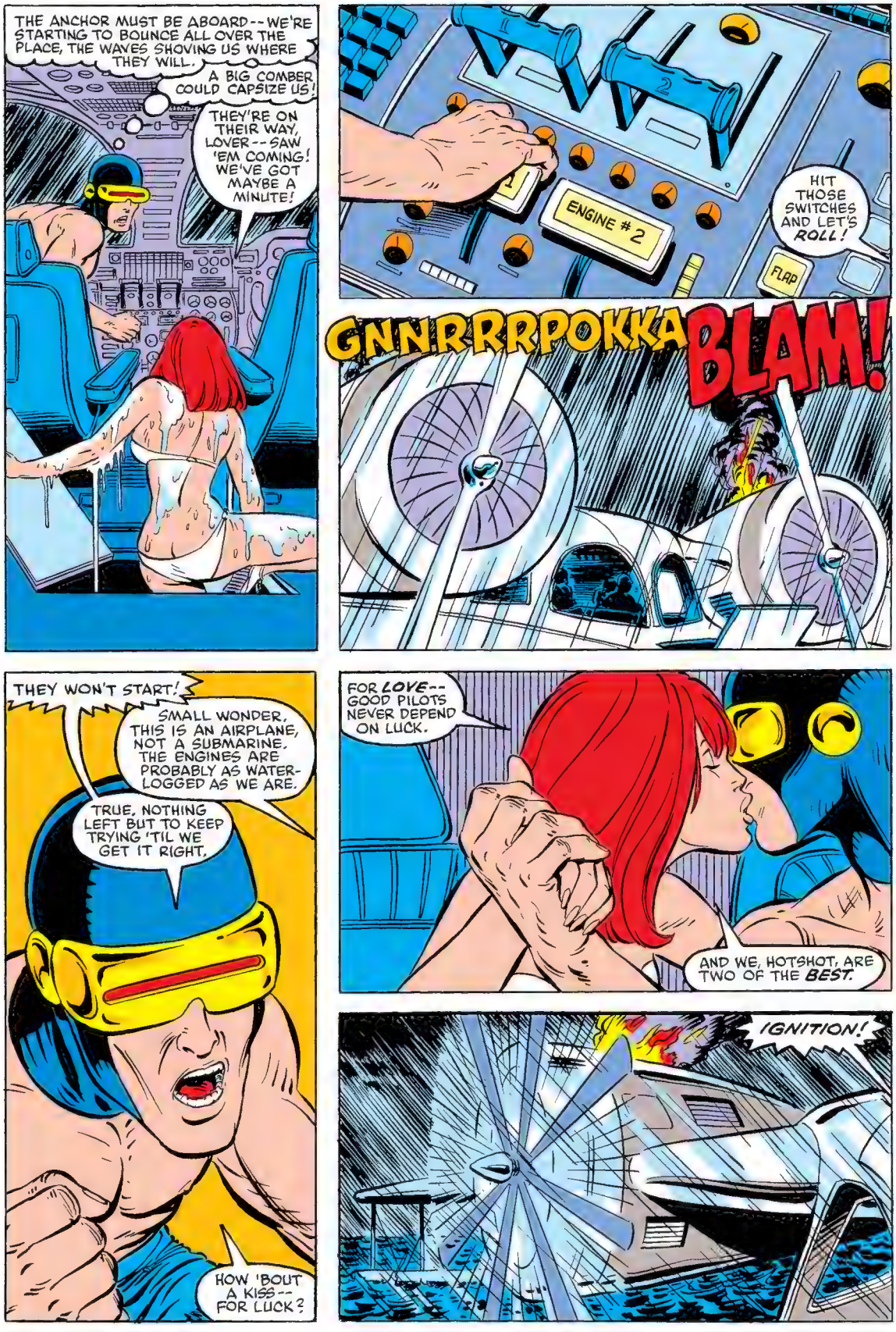

BE PATIENT, CALIBAN--TRUST ME, OBEY ME--AND YOUR HEART'S DESIRE WILL BE YOURS.
STORM BOSS NOW.
SUPPOSE SHE OBJECTS?
THEN, MASQUE, I GET MY HEART'S DESIRE, TOO.
MEANWHILE...
SHE'S WORSENING, SCOTT.
IF WE DON'T MAKE IT THIS TIME...
WE'VE DONE OUR BEST, THEY OUGHT'A START.
IN THAT CASE, I WON'T MENTION MR. MURPHY'S LAW.
THANKS, HONEY. I NEEDED THAT.
CROSS YOUR FINGERS.
HERE GOES!
KEEP AN EYE ON THE ENGINES, SCOTT...
...WHILE I HAUL IN THE SEA ANCHOR!
WHAT THE--?! BLOODY THING FEELS LIKE IT'S SNAGGED--
AYYIII!!


MADELYNE!!
SO MUCH RAIN AND SPRAY-- I COULDN'T SEE CLEARLY--
--DID SHE FALL OR WAS SHE YANKED OVERBOARD?!
NO SIGN OF HER-- WHAT THE HECK COULD HAVE HAPPENED?!!
SCOTT!!
GOOD LORD-- A TENTACLE!?!
CAREFUL! I WANT TO BLAST MADELYNE LOOSE WITHOUT HURTING HER-- HUH?!?
SOMETHING TOUCHED MY LEG!

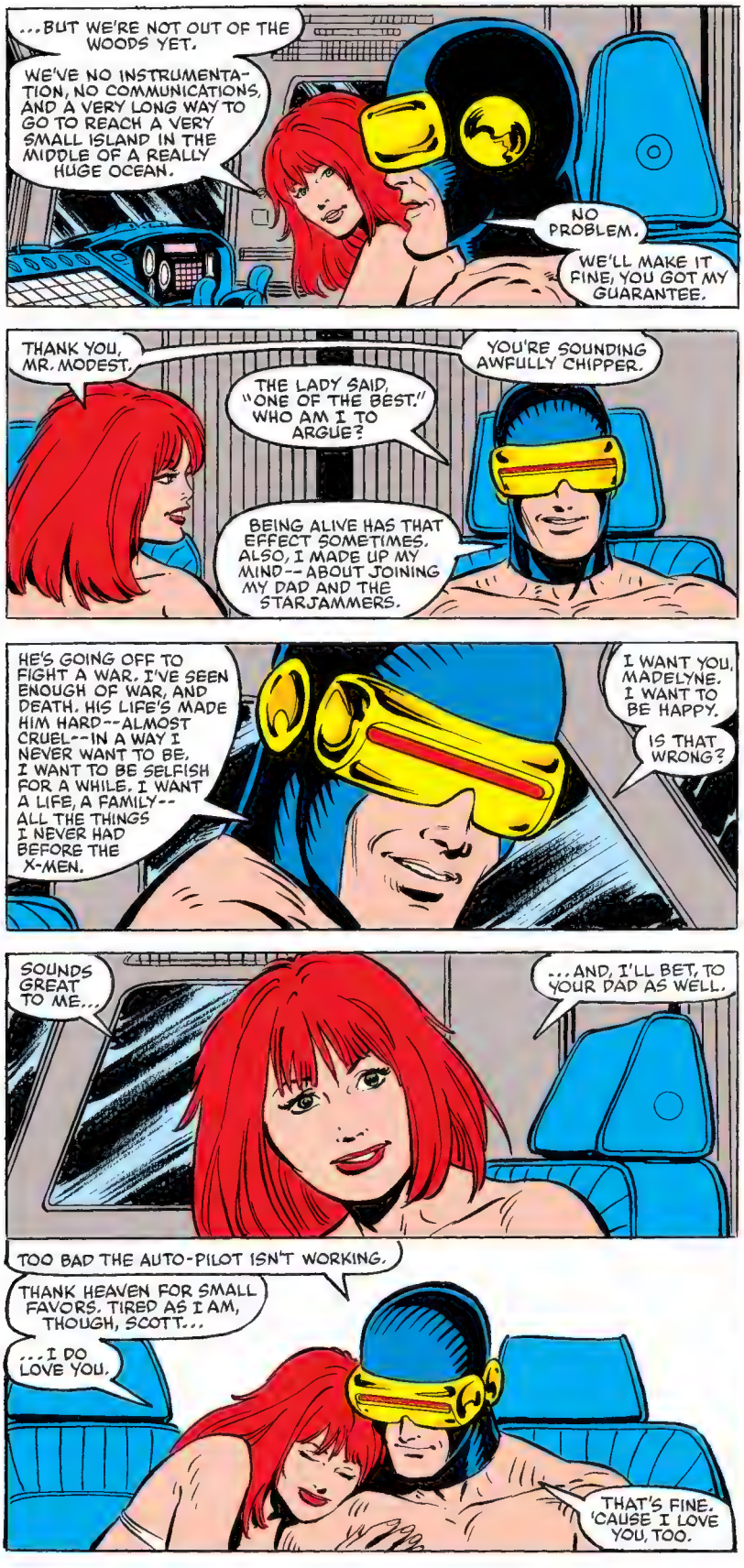

YOULLP!
GLASSES--MUSTN'T LOSE MY GLASSES!
I'M VIRTUALLY HELPLESS WITHOUT THEM! I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE A BLESSED...
...THING.
I THOUGHT SQUIDS THIS SIZE ONLY EXISTED IN MOVIES!
LIVE AND LEARN, I GUESS.
I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE GENTLE.
GREAT! IT RE-LEASED BOTH OF US!
MAYBE THAT MONSTER'LL TAKE MY HINT...
...AND LEAVE US ALONE--NO!


BAD MOVE, BUSTER! AT THIS RANGE, MY OPTIC BLASTS CAN PUNCH THROUGH STEEL ARMOUR PLATE!
TROUBLE IS, BUSTING FREE IS THE LEAST OF MY PROBLEMS.
MADELYNE--!
OVER HERE! BEHIND YOU!
KEEP YELLING! USE YOUR VOICE TO GUIDE ME!
I LOST MY GLASSES. THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT MY OPTIC BLASTS FROM FIRING...
...IS TO KEEP MY EYES SHUT TIGHT!
I SAW YOU ZAP THE SQUID. DID YOU KILL IT?
THE WATER BLUNTED THE FORCE OF THE BEAM. I DOUBT I EVEN HURT IT MUCH--EXCEPT TO MAKE IT MAD.
SWIM STRAIGHT AHEAD! THE PLANE ISN'T FAR!
OH, NO!
COULDN'T GRAB...DECENT BREATH...ONLY SECONDS TO ACT BEFORE I DROWN.
SQUID'S PULLING ME STRAIGHT DOWN, IT MUST BE DIRECTLY BELOW. MADELYNE'S STILL ON THE SURFACE--OUT OF MY LINE OF FIRE--I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HER.
LET'S SEE HOW WELL THIS MONSTER HANDLES A FULL POWER BLAST!


GOT IT!
BUT HOW DEEP AM I?!
LUNGS HURT-- ALMOST NO BREATH LEFT--
--I MUSTN'T PANIC, THAT'LL FINISH ME FOR SURE!
AIR!!
NOW WHAT?! IF I OPEN MY EYES TO LOOK AT THE PLANE, I COULD DESTROY IT!
I'M BEING GRABBED AGAIN-- ANOTHER SQUID!?!
SCOTT, STOP STRUGGLING, IT'S ME!
IT'S MADELYNE!
WE'RE LUCKY WE'RE IN THE LEE OF THE GOOSE-- THE WATER ISN'T AS ROUGH.
WHEN WE REACH THE HATCH, I'LL SHOVE YOU INSIDE, THEN SWIM FORWARD TO TAKE CARE OF THE SEA ANCHOR.
BARELY MADE IT, EVEN WITH MADELYNE'S HELP.
SWALLOWED TOO MUCH OCEAN--WANT TO BE SICK, I WANT TO LAY DOWN AND DIE. IF I DON'T GET MY ACT TOGETHER, I'LL GET MY WISH!
WHERE'S MY FLIGHT BAG?! IT'S CARRYING MY COSTUME AND VISOR!
THERE! THIS RUBY QUARTZ LENS GIVES ME COMPLETE CONTROL OVER MY EYE BEAMS.
IF LYNNE RUNS INTO ANY MORE TROUBLE, I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP HER PROPERLY.


THE ANCHOR MUST BE ABOARD--WE'RE STARTING TO BOUNCE ALL OVER THE PLACE, THE WAVES SHOVING US WHERE THEY WILL.
A BIG COMBER COULD CAPSIZE US!
THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY, LOVER--SAW 'EM COMING! WE'VE GOT MAYBE A MINUTE!
ENGINE # 2
HIT THOSE SWITCHES AND LET'S ROLL!
FLAP
GNNRRRPOKKA
BLAM!
THEY WON'T START!
SMALL WONDER, THIS IS AN AIRPLANE, NOT A SUBMARINE. THE ENGINES ARE PROBABLY AS WATER-LOGGED AS WE ARE.
TRUE, NOTHING LEFT BUT TO KEEP TRYING 'TIL WE GET IT RIGHT.
HOW 'BOUT A KISS--FOR LUCK?
FOR LOVE--GOOD PILOTS NEVER DEPEND ON LUCK.
AND WE, HOTSHOT, ARE TWO OF THE BEST.
IGNITION!

CATCH, YOU BIG, UGLY BEAST--CATCH!
WAH--HOOO!!
WE'RE--AIRBORNE!!
SCOTT, LOVE, I HATE TO SPOIL AN ABSOLUTELY MAGNIFICENT MOMENT...


...BUT WE'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET.
WE'VE NO INSTRUMENTATION, NO COMMUNICATIONS, AND A VERY LONG WAY TO GO TO REACH A VERY SMALL ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF A REALLY HUGE OCEAN.
NO PROBLEM.
WE'LL MAKE IT FINE, YOU GOT MY GUARANTEE.
THANK YOU, MR. MODEST.
YOU'RE SOUNDING AWFULLY CHIPPER.
THE LADY SAID, "ONE OF THE BEST." WHO AM I TO ARGUE?
BEING ALIVE HAS THAT EFFECT SOMETIMES. ALSO, I MADE UP MY MIND--ABOUT JOINING MY DAD AND THE STARJAMMERS.
HE'S GOING OFF TO FIGHT A WAR. I'VE SEEN ENOUGH OF WAR, AND DEATH. HIS LIFE'S MADE HIM HARD--ALMOST CRUEL--IN A WAY I NEVER WANT TO BE. I WANT TO BE SELFISH FOR A WHILE. I WANT A LIFE, A FAMILY--ALL THE THINGS I NEVER HAD BEFORE THE X-MEN.
I WANT YOU, MADELYNE. I WANT TO BE HAPPY.
IS THAT WRONG?
SOUNDS GREAT TO ME...
...AND, I'LL BET, TO YOUR DAD AS WELL.
TOO BAD THE AUTO-PILOT ISN'T WORKING.
THANK HEAVEN FOR SMALL FAVORS. TIRED AS I AM, THOUGH, SCOTT...
...I DO LOVE YOU.
THAT'S FINE. 'CAUSE I LOVE YOU, TOO.

THE BEGINNING.
NEXT ISSUE:
SANCTIONS

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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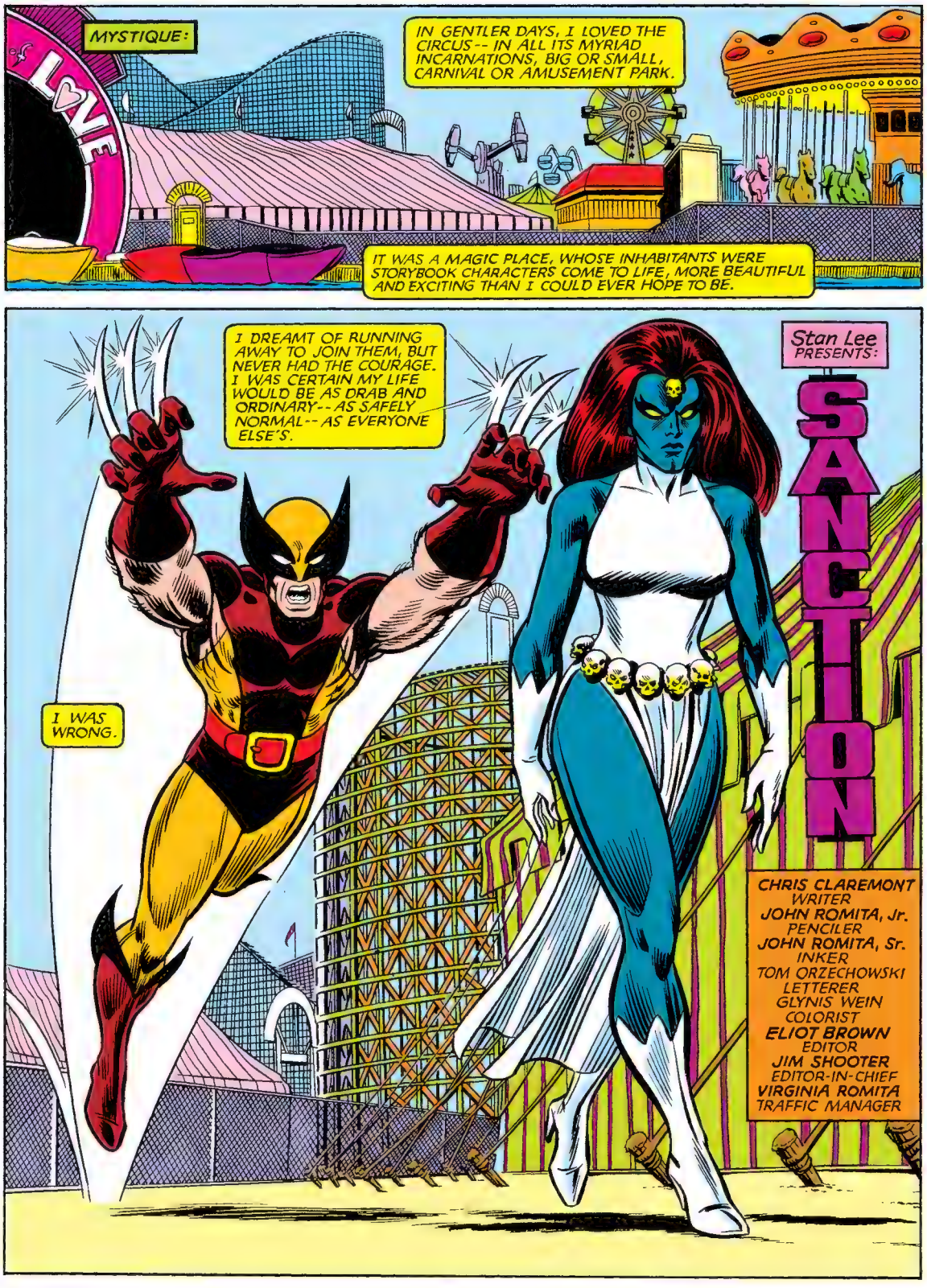
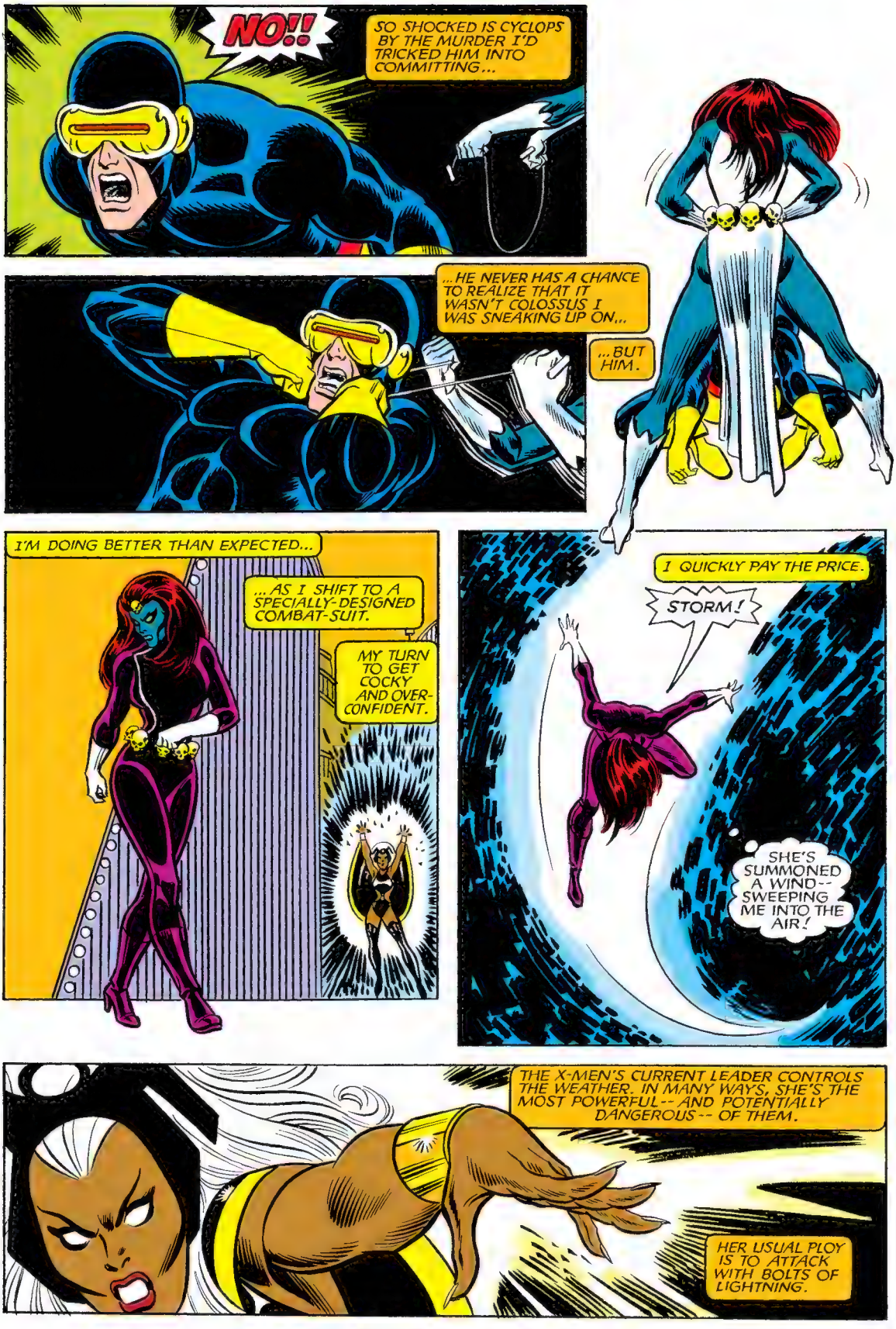

MYSTIQUE:
IN GENTLER DAYS, I LOVED THE CIRCUS-- IN ALL ITS MYRIAD INCARNATIONS, BIG OR SMALL, CARNIVAL OR AMUSEMENT PARK.
IT WAS A MAGIC PLACE, WHOSE INHABITANTS WERE STORYBOOK CHARACTERS COME TO LIFE, MORE BEAUTIFUL AND EXCITING THAN I COULD EVER HOPE TO BE.
I DREAMT OF RUNNING AWAY TO JOIN THEM, BUT NEVER HAD THE COURAGE. I WAS CERTAIN MY LIFE WOULD BE AS DRAB AND ORDINARY--AS SAFELY NORMAL--AS EVERYONE ELSE'S.
I WAS WRONG.
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
SANCTION
CHRIS CLAREMONT WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. PENCILER
JOHN ROMITA, Sr. INKER
TOM ORZECHOWSKI LETTERER
GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST
ELIOT BROWN EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
VIRGINIA ROMITA TRAFFIC MANAGER

FAST AS I REACT TO WOLVERINE'S ATTACK...
... HE STILL DRAWS BLOOD.
MY KICK WOULD HAVE BROKEN THE NECK OF AN ORDINARY MAN.
BUT THIS X-MAN'S BONES ARE LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM--
--THE STRONGEST SUBSTANCE KNOWN --MAKING THEM VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.
HIS CLAWS ARE FORGED OF THE PURE METAL. RAZOR-KEEN, THEY CAN CUT STEEL GIRDERS WITH EASE.
TICKETS 50¢
BUT FOR ALL HIS POWER AND SKILL...
... HE IS STILL VULNERABLE...
...TO A SLIT THROAT.
NO BONES TO STOP MY BLADE.
AND EVEN YOUR MUTANT HEALING FACTOR WON'T PREVENT YOUR BLEEDING TO DEATH.
TS¢

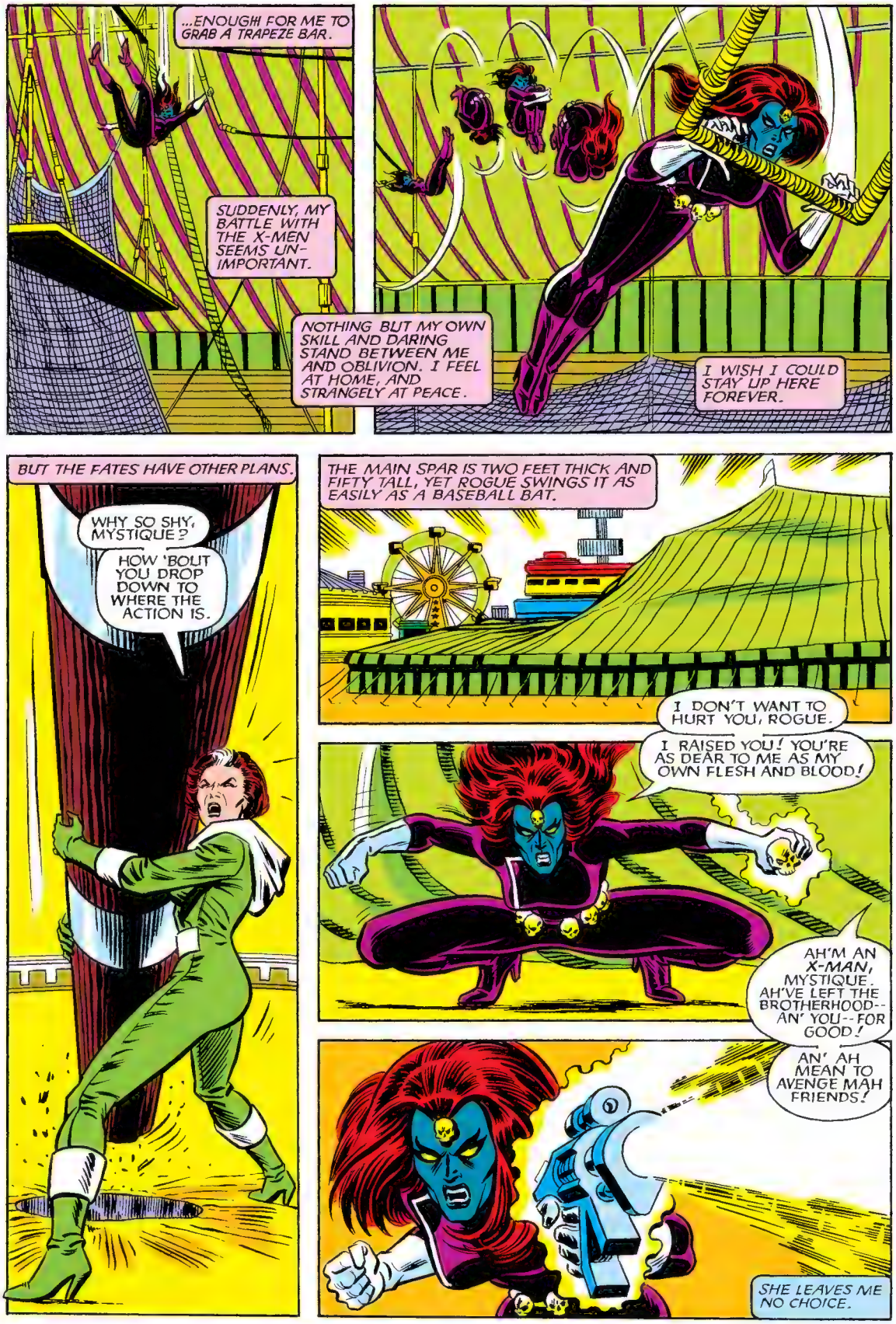
MOMENTS LATER, KITTY PRYDE-- THE YOUNGEST OF MY FOES--PHASES INTO VIEW. HERS IS THE ABILITY TO PASS LIKE A GHOST THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS.
TICKETS
TICKETS 50¢
WOLVIE!!
SHE HAS COURAGE AND INTELLIGENCE-- BUT HER RELATIVE INEXPERIENCE WILL PROVE HER UNDOING.
THERE'S NO PULSE! BUT HOW CAN HE BE DEAD... THERE ISN'T A MARK ON...
...HIM...
SNIKT!
FOOLISH CHILD. YOU FORGET WHO YOU'RE UP AGAINST:
...MYSTIQUE-- LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
A SHAPE-CHANGER WHO CAN DUPLICATE ANYONE'S FACE AND FORM TO PERFECTION.
MURDERER!
WHUNNGH!

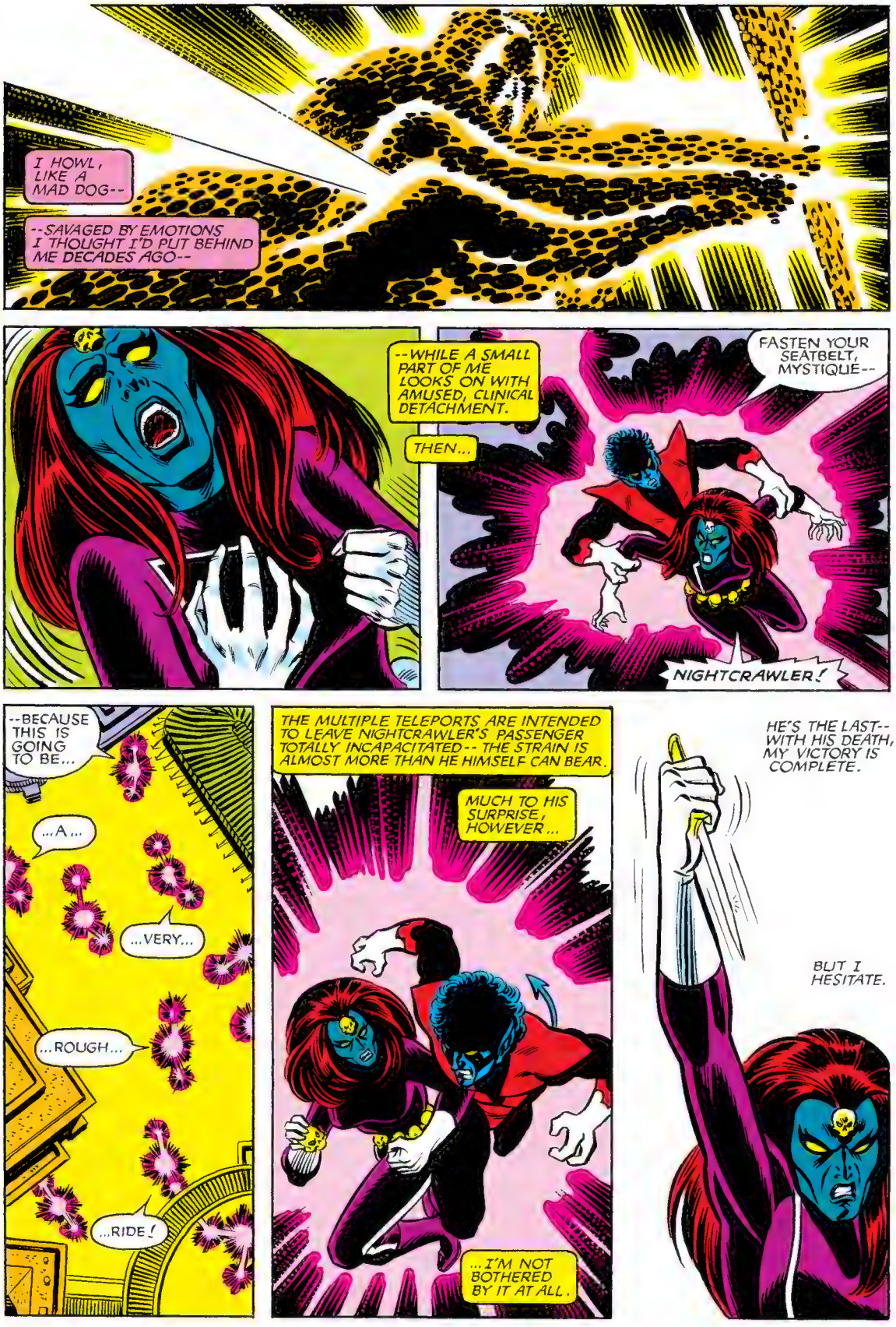
SHE WAS A CHILD, MYSTIQUE-- WHO NEVER DID YOU ANY HARM--
--YET YOU KILLED HER!
AS I WILL YOU, COLOSSUS.
NO ONE FORCED HER TO JOIN THE X-MEN.
SHE KNEW THE RISKS.
THE RUSSIAN LOVES KITTY. HIS EMOTIONS-- HIS GRIEF AND RAGE-- MAKE HIM CARELESS.
MY FLARE-SKULL EXPLODES ON CONTACT-- BRIGHT AS THE SUN-- ITS HEAT SCARRING AND MELTING COLOSSUS' ARMORED SKIN.
BUT, AN INSTANT LATER, HIS BELLOW OF AGONY IS ECHOED BY ONE OF MY OWN.
CYCLOPS!
OPTIC BLAST-- NEARLY SNAPPED ME IN TWO!
MUST REACH COVER-- BEFORE HE FIRES AGAIN!
FUN HOUSE
FOR ALL THE PAIN, THAT SHOT WAS MEANT ONLY TO STUN.

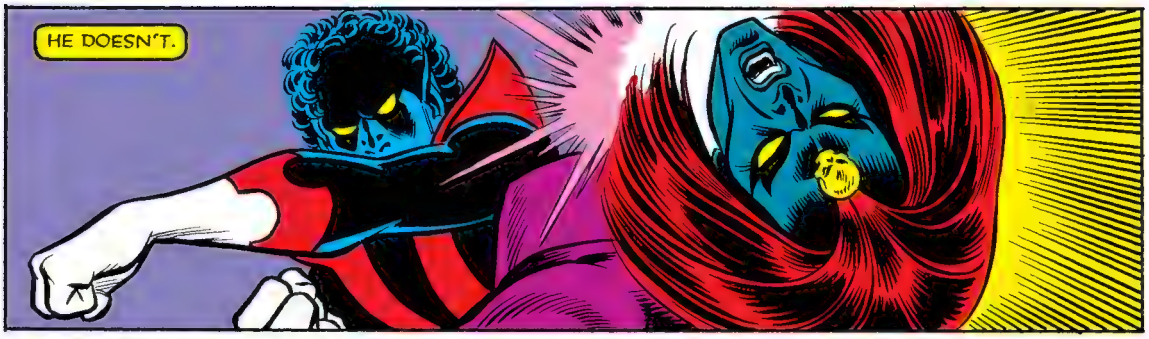
CYCLOPS WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE X-MEN--THEIR FIRST, BEST LEADER-- AND HE STILL PLAYS BY THE OLD RULES. EVEN AFTER WHAT'S HAPPENED TONIGHT, HE'LL TRY TO TAKE ME ALIVE.
HIS SCRUPLES GIVE ME MY EDGE.
COLOSSUS, DON'T FOLLOW HER IN THERE! THAT'S WHAT SHE WANTS!
WITHIN THE FUNHOUSE ARE SCORES OF MIRRORS--AND CYCLOPS HAS NO WAY OF TELLING REFLECTION FROM REALITY.
COLOSSUS STILL SUFFERS FROM THE EFFECTS OF MY FLARE-SKULL, HELPLESS AS HE IS VIRTUALLY BLIND.
I MILK THE MOMENT...
...TAKING SLOW, DELIBERATE AIM.
ZAP
PETER--BEHIND YOU!
ANOTHER STUN BEAM...
...THAT PASSES HARMLESSLY THROUGH A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION OF MYSELF, BEFORE BOUNCING OFF THE MIRRORS...
...AND INTO A CAREFULLY-PLACED AMPLIFIER MODULE--EACH OF WHOSE LENSES AMPLIFIES THE BEAM'S FORCE A HUNDRED-FOLD--
--MAKING IT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO PENETRATE ANYTHING.
EVEN A BODY COMPOSED OF ORGANIC STEEL.


NO!!
SO SHOCKED IS CYCLOPS BY THE MURDER I'D TRICKED HIM INTO COMMITTING...
...HE NEVER HAS A CHANCE TO REALIZE THAT IT WASN'T COLOSSUS I WAS SNEAKING UP ON...
...BUT HIM.
I'M DOING BETTER THAN EXPECTED...
...AS I SHIFT TO A SPECIALLY-DESIGNED COMBAT-SUIT.
MY TURN TO GET COCKY AND OVER-CONFIDENT.
I QUICKLY PAY THE PRICE.
STORM!
SHE'S SUMMONED A WIND-- SWEEPING ME INTO THE AIR!
THE X-MEN'S CURRENT LEADER CONTROLS THE WEATHER. IN MANY WAYS, SHE'S THE MOST POWERFUL-- AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS-- OF THEM.
HER USUAL PLOY IS TO ATTACK WITH BOLTS OF LIGHTNING.

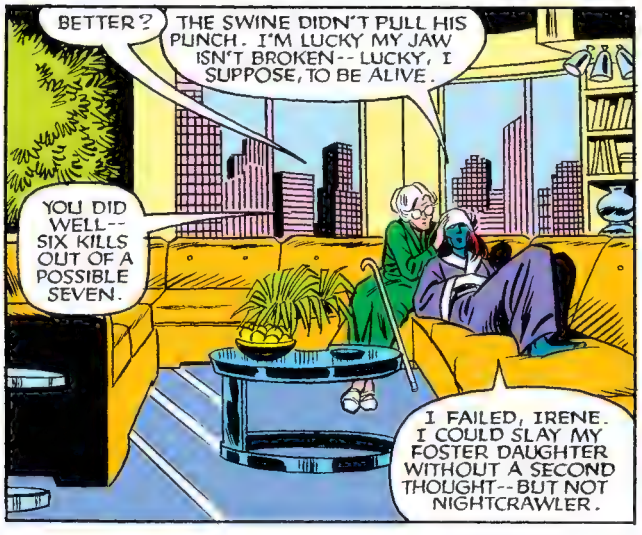
I'M READY FOR YOU, WITCH!
THIS SUIT ABSORBS THE POWER OF YOUR LIGHTNING...
... AND CONVERTS IT INTO ENERGY FOR MY OWN USE!
FOR ALL THE BRAVADO IN MY VOICE, INSIDE I'M SHAKING. THE SUIT'S CAPABILITIES ARE PURELY THEORETICAL -- IT'S NEVER BEEN TESTED UNDER ACTUAL COMBAT CONDITIONS.
I'M GLAD TO SEE IT WORKS.
STORM DODGES MY ENERGY BLAST WITH EASE, BUT I EXPECTED THAT. I'M AIMING FOR THE FUEL TRUCK PARKED BEHIND HER.
BWHOOM!
OF COURSE, WITH STORM DEAD, THE WINDS THAT HELD ME ALOFT VANISH AS WELL.
I ANGLE MY FALL TOWARDS THE "BIG TOP..."
... AND USE ITS CANVAS ROOF TO SLOW MY DESCENT...

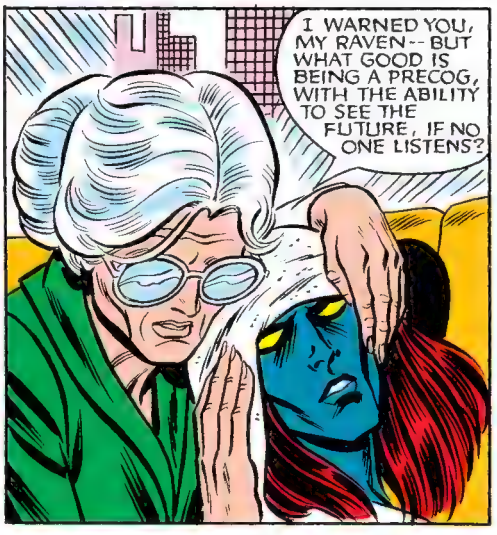

...ENOUGH! FOR ME TO GRAB A TRAPEZE BAR.
SUDDENLY, MY BATTLE WITH THE X-MEN SEEMS UN-IMPORTANT.
NOTHING BUT MY OWN SKILL AND DARING STAND BETWEEN ME AND OBLIVION. I FEEL AT HOME, AND STRANGELY AT PEACE.
I WISH I COULD STAY UP HERE FOREVER.
BUT THE FATES HAVE OTHER PLANS.
WHY SO SHY, MYSTIQUE?
HOW 'BOUT YOU DROP DOWN TO WHERE THE ACTION IS.
THE MAIN SPAR IS TWO FEET THICK AND FIFTY TALL, YET ROGUE SWINGS IT AS EASILY AS A BASEBALL BAT.
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, ROGUE.
I RAISED YOU! YOU'RE AS DEAR TO ME AS MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD!
AH'M AN X-MAN, MYSTIQUE. AH'VE LEFT THE BROTHERHOOD--AN' YOU--FOR GOOD!
AN' AH MEAN TO AVENGE MAH FRIENDS!
SHE LEAVES ME NO CHOICE.

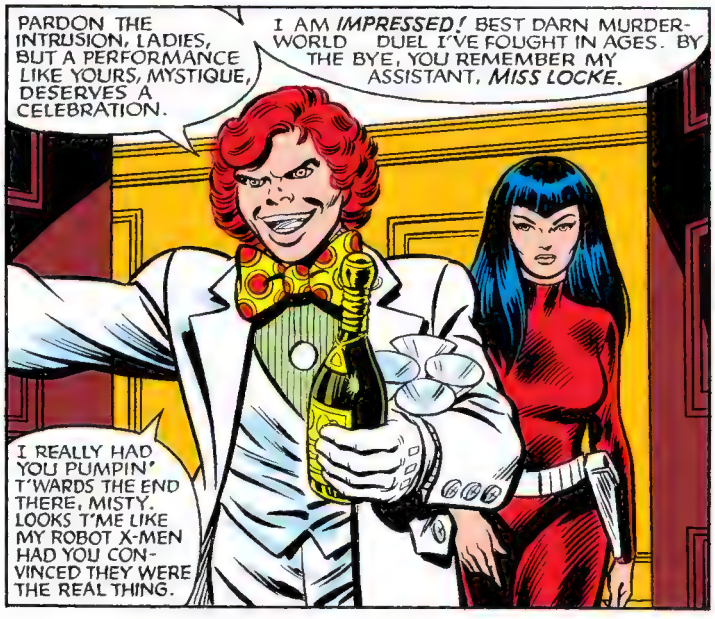

I HOWL, LIKE A MAD DOG--
--SAVAGED BY EMOTIONS I THOUGHT I'D PUT BEHIND ME DECADES AGO--
--WHILE A SMALL PART OF ME LOOKS ON WITH AMUSED, CLINICAL DETACHMENT.
THEN...
FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT, MYSTIQUE--
NIGHTCRAWLER!
--BECAUSE THIS IS GOING TO BE...
...A...
...VERY...
...ROUGH...
...RIDE!
THE MULTIPLE TELEPORTS ARE INTENDED TO LEAVE NIGHTCRAWLER'S PASSENGER TOTALLY INCAPACITATED-- THE STRAIN IS ALMOST MORE THAN HE HIMSELF CAN BEAR.
MUCH TO HIS SURPRISE, HOWEVER...
...I'M NOT BOTHERED BY IT AT ALL.
HE'S THE LAST-- WITH HIS DEATH, MY VICTORY IS COMPLETE.
BUT I HESITATE.

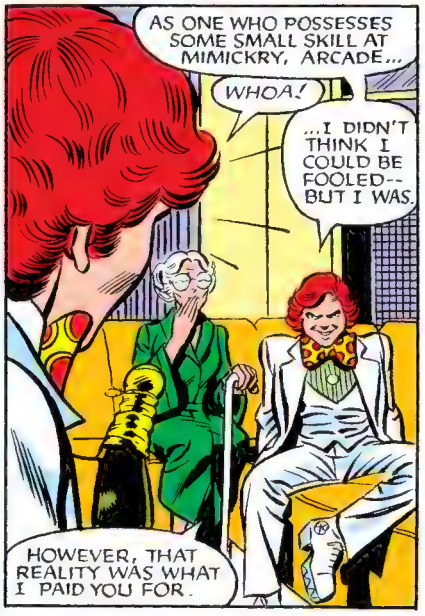


THE NEXT THING I'M AWARE OF IS A COOL CLOTH ON MY FOREHEAD AND EQUALLY COOL HANDS PRESSED GENTLY AGAINST A FACE I'M CERTAIN IS SWOLLEN TO TEN TIMES ITS NORMAL SIZE.


BETTER?
THE SWINE DIDN'T PULL HIS PUNCH. I'M LUCKY MY JAW ISN'T BROKEN-- LUCKY, I SUPPOSE, TO BE ALIVE.
YOU DID WELL-- SIX KILLS OUT OF A POSSIBLE SEVEN.
I FAILED, IRENE. I COULD SLAY MY FOSTER DAUGHTER WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT--BUT NOT NIGHTCRAWLER.



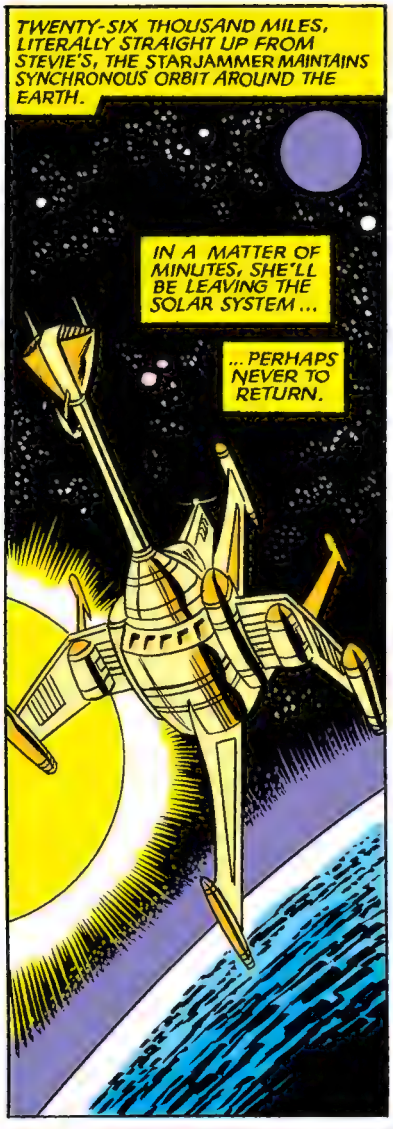

PARDON THE INTRUSION, LADIES, BUT A PERFORMANCE LIKE YOURS, MYSTIQUE, DESERVES A CELEBRATION.
I AM *IMPRESSED!* BEST DARN MURDER-WORLD DUEL I'VE FOUGHT IN AGES. BY THE BYE, YOU REMEMBER MY ASSISTANT, *MISS LOCKE.*
I REALLY HAD YOU PUMPIN' T'WARDS THE END THERE, MISTY. LOOKS T'ME LIKE MY ROBOT X-MEN HAD YOU CONVINCED THEY WERE THE REAL THING.

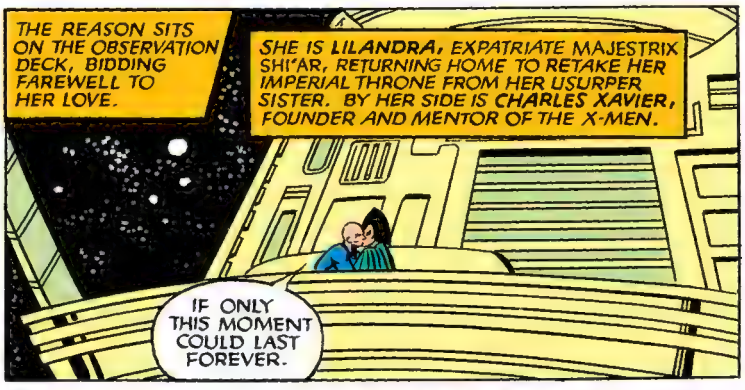

AS ONE WHO POSSESSES SOME SMALL SKILL AT MIMICKRY, ARCADE...
WHOA!
...I DIDN'T THINK I COULD BE FOOLED-- BUT I WAS.
HOWEVER, THAT REALITY WAS WHAT I PAID YOU FOR.

WOMAN, I'M NOT IN THIS FOR THE BUCKS.
POP!
I DO IT FOR THE FUN! A GAME LIKE YOURS IS ON THE HOUSE.
YOU WIN, PERHAPS I DIE. YOU LOSE, NOTHING HAPPENS.
SOMEHOW, ARCADE, THAT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE FAIR.
MY GAME, SWEETHEART, MY RULES.
THE X-MEN WOULDN'T HAVE FOUGHT SOLO LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW. THEY'D USE TEAMWORK. NOR WOULD THEY BE SO CARELESS.
I CAN PRETTY MUCH DUPLICATE THEIR POWERS WITH MY ROBOTS AN' MURDERWORLD -- BUT WHAT YOU PROVED DOWN THERE WAS THAT YOU COULD BEAT *ME*.
THAT, I MIGHT ADD, IS NO MEAN FEAT.
I'D LIKE YOU TO TRAIN MY BROTHERHOOD THE SAME WAY, BY PITTING THEM AGAINST YOUR X-MEN ROBOTS.
NO PROBLEM-- PROVIDED WE USE TONIGHT'S PARAMETERS.
NAMELY, THAT ONE O' THOSE HEROES WON'T BE PROGRAMMED TO STUN ITS FOE, BUT *KILL*.
A LITTLE SOMETHIN' T' MAKE THE STAKES MORE INTERESTING FOR ALL CONCERNED.
AGREED.
BY THE WAY, ARCADE, WHICH X-MAN WAS IT IN MY CASE?
THE OBVIOUS ONE, CUPCAKE--
--ROGUE.

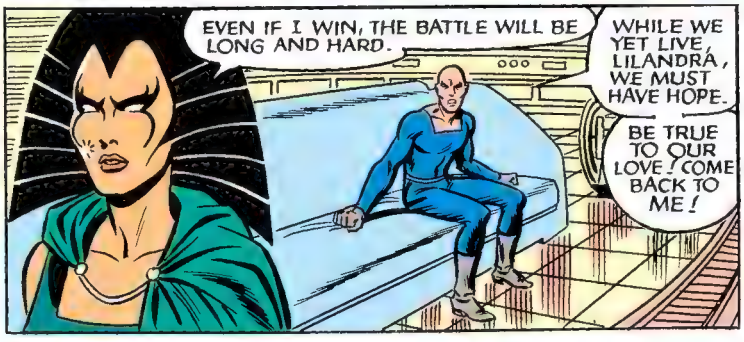
HE DOESN'T LIKE LOSING. EACH MATCH WILL BE HARDER--AND DEADLIER--THAN THE ONE BEFORE, BUT THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT I WANT.
WHY THE SOUR LOOK, IRENE?
THIS VENDETTA YOU PLAN AGAINST THE X-MEN IS A MISTAKE.
IS IT WRONG TO WANT MY DAUGHTER BACK, TO DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO GET HER?!
SUPPOSE ROGUE LEFT OF HER OWN FREE WILL? YOU KNOW HOW TROUBLED SHE'S BEEN OF LATE.
NO!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT, ROGUE WOULD NEVER ABANDON ME.
IF SHE'S WITH THE X-MEN, IT'S BECAUSE XAVIER FORCED HER WITH HIS ACCURSED TELEPATHIC POWERS. HE'S MANIPULATING HER MIND!
RAVEN, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE COST?
YOU COULD NOT HARM A FACSIMILE NIGHTCRAWLER--
--HOW WILL YOU FARE AGAINST THE MAN HIMSELF? IF HE'S KILLED...
BE SILENT, WOMAN!
MENTION HIM AGAIN, DESTINY, AT YOUR PERIL. THE X-MEN HAVE MY CHILD AND IF I HAVE TO SLAUGHTER THEM ALL TO RESCUE HER...
...THEN I SHALL!
STEVIE HUNTER'S DANCE STUDIO -- IN THE TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, NEAR THE X-MEN'S HOME AND SECRET HEADQUARTERS...
GOT A MINUTE, STEVIE?
SURE, KITTY--YOU OKAY?
YOU'VE BEEN PRETTY DISTRACTED THE PAST FEW WEEKS, EVER SINCE YOU RETURNED FROM JAPAN.
WHAT DO YOU DO...
...WHEN SOMEONE YOU RESPECT AND REALLY CARED FOR, A PERSON YOU THOUGHT WAS CLOSER TO YOU THAN ALMOST ANYONE IN THE WHOLE WORLD, EVEN YOUR PARENTS...
...SUDDENLY CHANGES SO COMPLETELY THAT SHE SEEMS LIKE A TOTAL STRANGER?

YOU MEAN ORORO?
Uh-huh.
IT'S ONLY A HAIRCUT, FOR GOODNESS SAKES, AND A CHANGE OF WARDROBE-- WHAT'S SO TERRIBLE ABOUT THAT?
IT'S MORE, STEVIE, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!
SHE'S CHANGED ON THE INSIDE AS WELL! THE ORORO I KNEW ISN'T THERE ANYMORE!
AND WHAT PRAY TELL HAS TAKEN HER PLACE...
ORORO!!
...A MONSTER?
COMPARED TO WHAT SHE ONCE WAS...
...MAYBE SO.
KITTY...
I GOTTA GET DRESSED.
I... WILL WAIT FOR YOU.
"MONSTER..."
DON'T LET THIS WORRY YOU, ORORO. YOU'VE SHAKEN THE KID UP SOME, SHE'S HAVING A HARD TIME ADJUSTING.
BE PATIENT. SHE'LL GET OVER IT.
THAT SOLVES HER PROBLEM.
BUT THE TRULY TERRIFYING THING IN ALL OF THIS, STEVIE...
...IS THAT I FEAR SHE MAY WELL BE RIGHT.

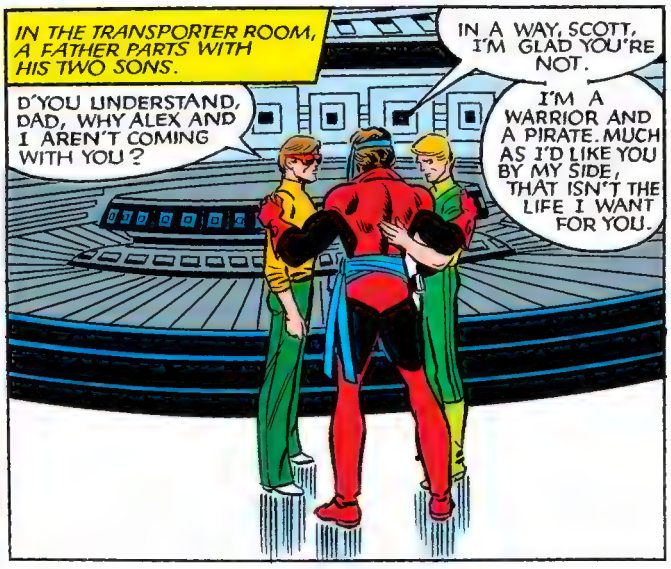

TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND MILES, LITERALLY STRAIGHT UP FROM STEVIE'S, THE STARJAMMER MAINTAINS SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT AROUND THE EARTH.
IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, SHE'LL BE LEAVING THE SOLAR SYSTEM...
...PERHAPS NEVER TO RETURN.

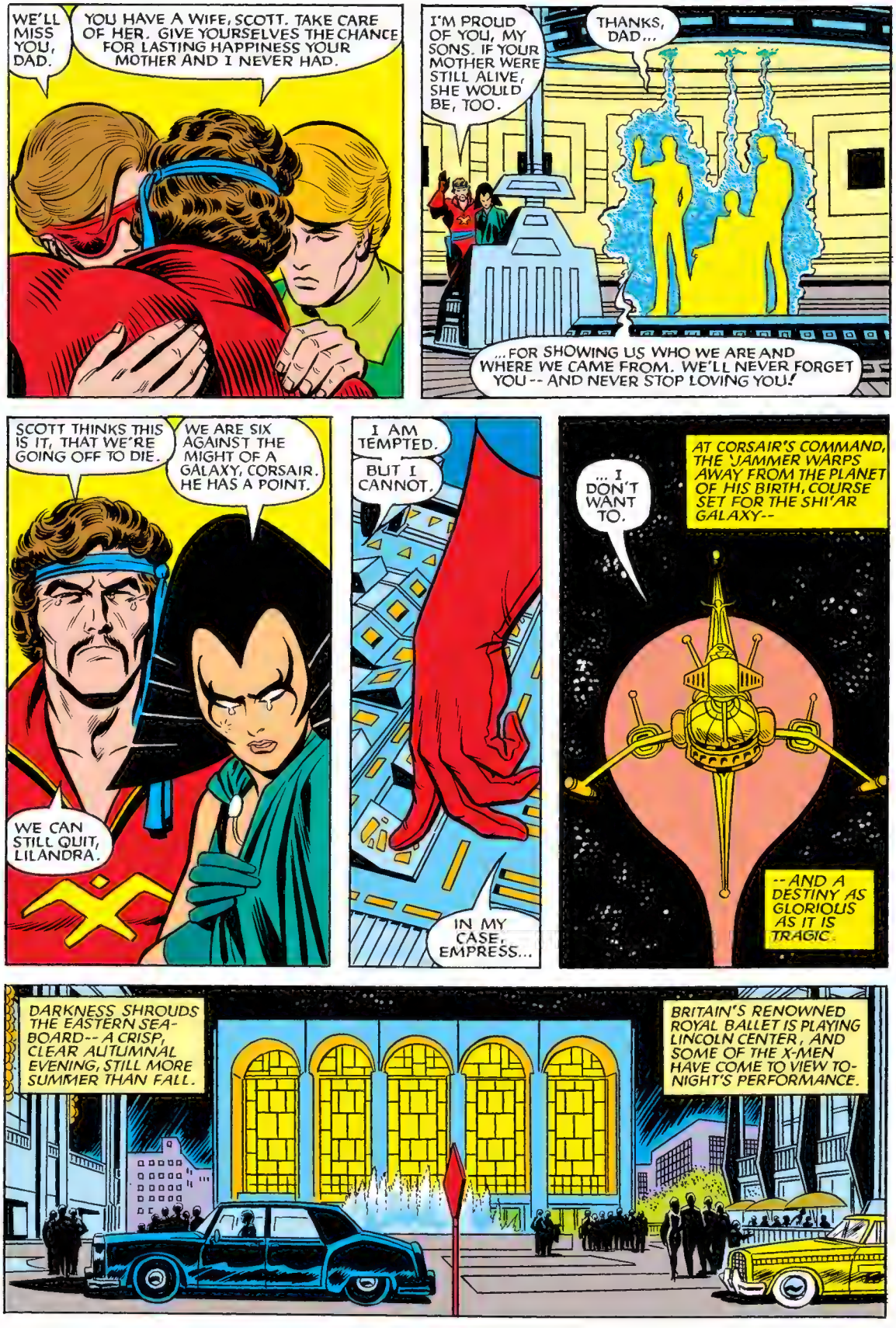

THE REASON SITS ON THE OBSERVATION DECK, BIDDING FAREWELL TO HER LOVE.
SHE IS LILANDRA, EXPATRIATE MAJESTRIX SHI'AR, RETURNING HOME TO RETAKE HER IMPERIAL THRONE FROM HER USURPER SISTER. BY HER SIDE IS CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER AND MENTOR OF THE X-MEN.
IF ONLY THIS MOMENT COULD LAST FOREVER.

REMEMBER IT, MY HEART, FOR IT MAY BE ALL WE HAVE.
I BELIEVE IN HAPPY ENDINGS, LIL. THERE WILL BE OTHERS, AND BETTER.
I WISH I SHARED YOUR OPTIMISM.


EVEN IF I WIN, THE BATTLE WILL BE LONG AND HARD.
WHILE WE YET LIVE, LILANDRA, WE MUST HAVE HOPE.
BE TRUE TO OUR LOVE! COME BACK TO ME!

I SHALL, CHARLES.
IF NEED BE, FROM THE GATES OF HELL ITSELF!

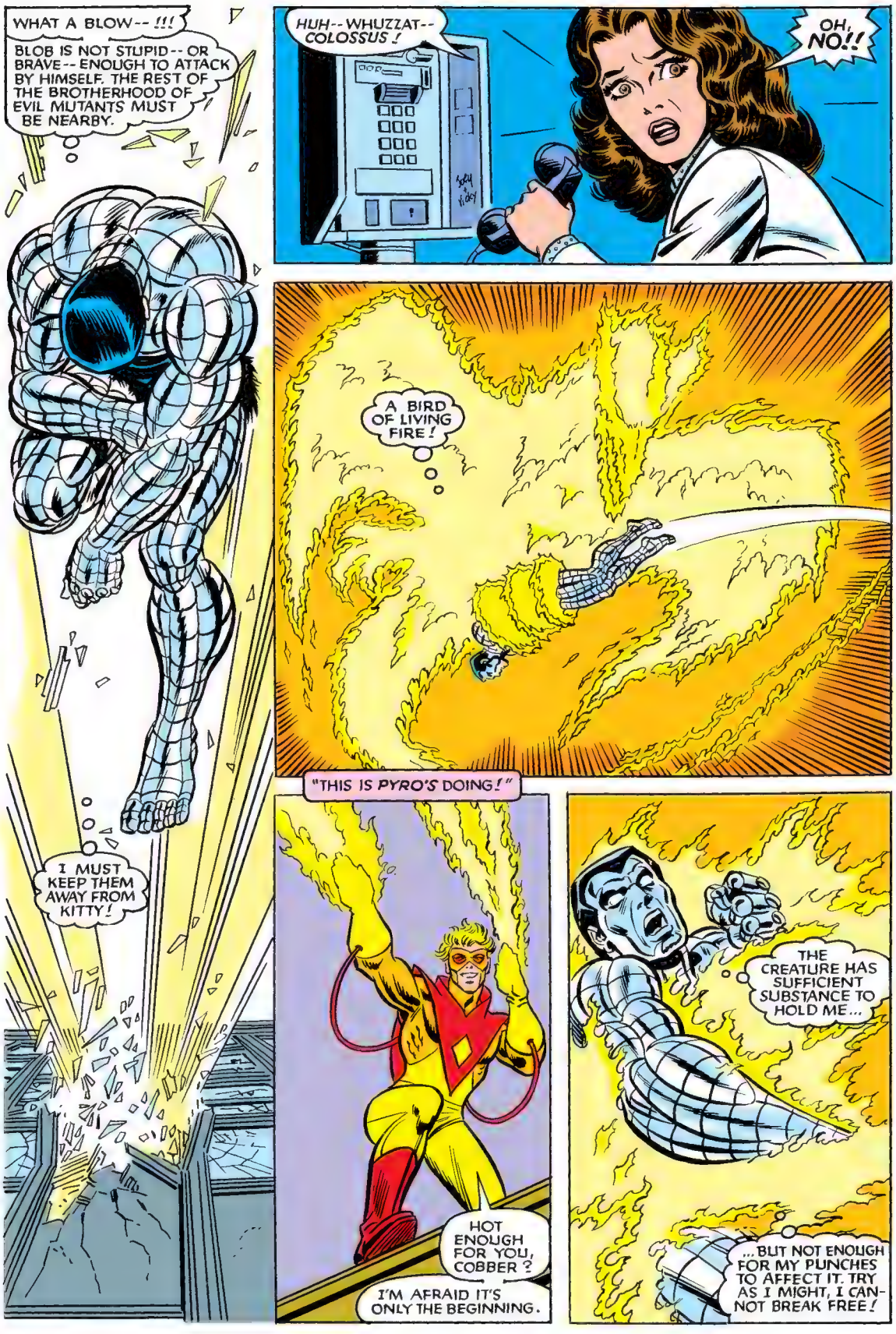

IN THE TRANSPORTER ROOM, A FATHER PARTS WITH HIS TWO SONS.
D'YOU UNDERSTAND, DAD, WHY ALEX AND I AREN'T COMING WITH YOU?
IN A WAY, SCOTT, I'M GLAD YOU'RE NOT.
I'M A WARRIOR AND A PIRATE. MUCH AS I'D LIKE YOU BY MY SIDE, THAT ISN'T THE LIFE I WANT FOR YOU.


WE'LL MISS YOU, DAD.
YOU HAVE A WIFE, SCOTT. TAKE CARE OF HER. GIVE YOURSELVES THE CHANCE FOR LASTING HAPPINESS YOUR MOTHER AND I NEVER HAD.
I'M PROUD OF YOU, MY SONS. IF YOUR MOTHER WERE STILL ALIVE, SHE WOULD BE, TOO.
THANKS, DAD...
...FOR SHOWING US WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE CAME FROM. WE'LL NEVER FORGET YOU -- AND NEVER STOP LOVING YOU!
SCOTT THINKS THIS IS IT, THAT WE'RE GOING OFF TO DIE.
WE ARE SIX AGAINST THE MIGHT OF A GALAXY, CORSAIR. HE HAS A POINT.
WE CAN STILL QUIT, LILANDRA.
I AM TEMPTED.
BUT I CANNOT.
IN MY CASE, EMPRESS...
AT CORSAIR'S COMMAND, THE 'JAMMER WARPS AWAY FROM THE PLANET OF HIS BIRTH, COURSE SET FOR THE SHI'AR GALAXY--
... I DON'T WANT TO.
--AND A DESTINY AS GLORIOUS AS IT IS TRAGIC.
DARKNESS SHROUDS THE EASTERN SEABOARD -- A CRISP, CLEAR AUTUMNAL EVENING, STILL MORE SUMMER THAN FALL.
BRITAIN'S RENOWNED ROYAL BALLET IS PLAYING LINCOLN CENTER, AND SOME OF THE X-MEN HAVE COME TO VIEW TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE.

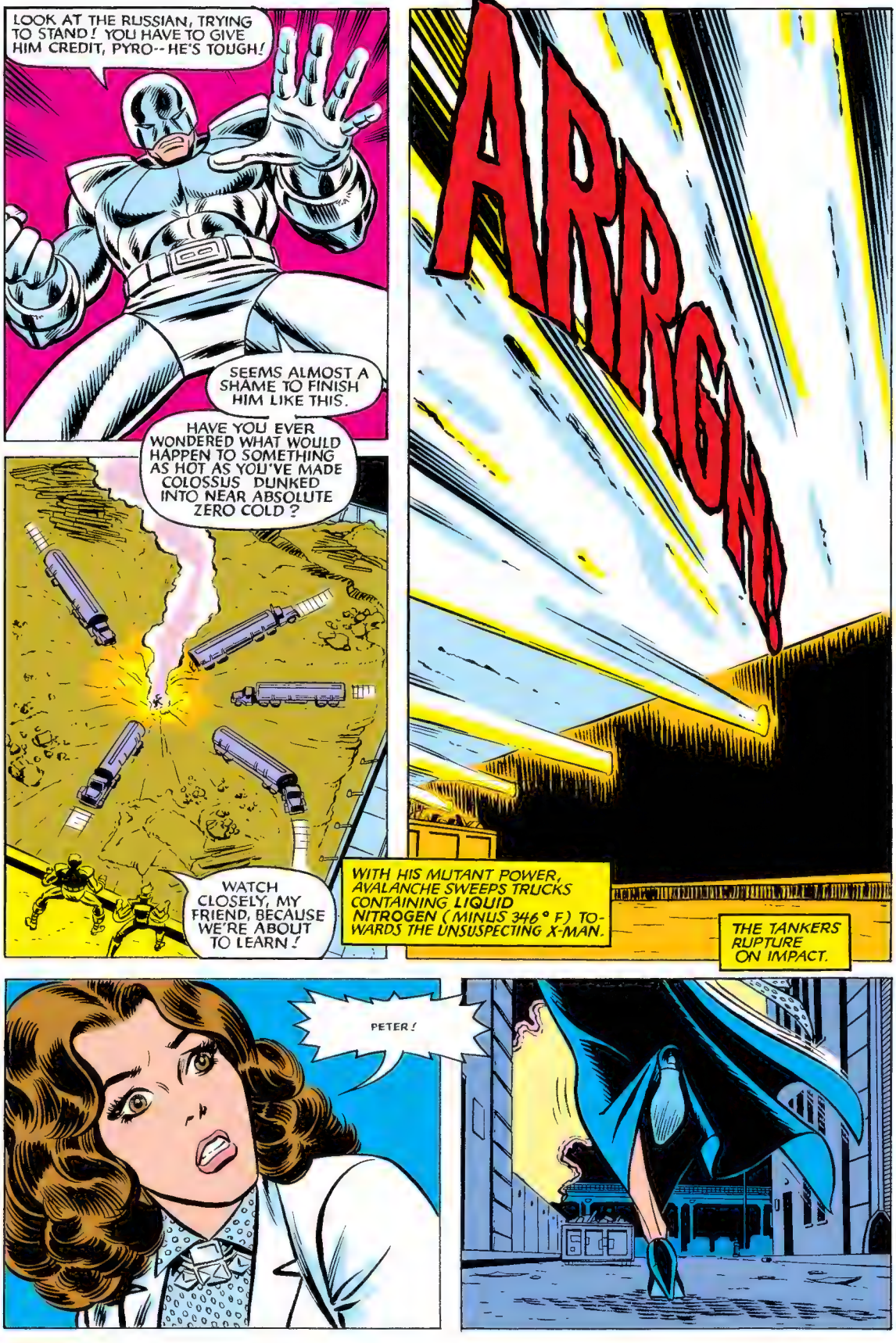
KITTY AND I WILL MEET YOU AT THE THEATRE, KURT, AFTER WE PARK THE AUTO.
DON'T YOU TWO GET DISTRACTED ALONG THE WAY.
KURT!! WE WOULDN'T!!!
PITY. I WOULD.
HURRY UP, THOUGH. THE SHOW'S ABOUT TO START.
YOU SHOULDN'T TEASE KITTY, NIGHTCRAWLER. IT ISN'T NICE.
EVERY SO OFTEN, LIEBCHEN, SINCE I LOOK LIKE A DEMON...
... I HAVE THIS IRRESISTABLE URGE TO PLAY THE PART.
IS ANYTHING THE MATTER, KURT, YOU SOUND SO DOWN?
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT SCOTT AND ALEX--ORPHANS MOST OF THEIR LIVES UNTIL CORSAIR ARRIVED TO GIVE THEM ROOTS AND A HERITAGE.
I WISH I WAS THAT LUCKY.
WHO AM I, AMANDA? WHERE DO I COME FROM?! WHAT IS MY REAL FAMILY?!!
I KNOW WHAT MOM TOLD ME--SHE FOUND YOU, NEW-BORN AND BARELY ALIVE, IN A ROADSIDE SHELTER IN THE BLACK FOREST. A MAN--YOUR FATHER, I GUESS--LAY OUTSIDE...
PROBABLY TOOK ONE LOOK AT ME...
... AND DROPPED DEAD FROM FRIGHT.
STOP IT, KURT, THAT ISN'T FUNNY!
THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANYONE ELSE.
BECAUSE OF YOUR APPEARANCE, MOTHER DECIDED TO RAISE YOU HERSELF, IN THE CIRCUS.
DID SHE EVER TRY TO FIND MY FAMILY?
I DON'T KNOW, I NEVER ASKED.
AND NEITHER DID YOU, BEFORE NOW. WHY ALL OF A SUDDEN IS IT SO IMPORTANT?
THE LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS, MYSTIQUE, LOOKS LIKE ME.
AND WHEN I ASKED IF THERE WAS A CONNECTION--BETWEEN US--
--SHE SAID ASK YOUR MOTHER, ASK MARGALI SZARDOS.

LIFE'S BEEN SO HECTIC THESE PAST MONTHS, I NEVER GOT THE OPPORTUNITY.
BUT I'VE LET MY QUESTIONS--AND FEARS--FESTER FAR TOO LONG. I NEED ANSWERS.
MOM'S IN GRAFBÜRG. WE CAN PHONE HER TOMORROW.
BLOCKS WESTWARD, NEAR THE HUDSON RIVER...
I WAS AFRAID WE'D NEVER FIND A SPACE. DRIVING IN THIS TOWN'S GETTING RIDICULOUS!
THE SKY IS CLEAR, KATYA. A BRISK WALK WILL DO US GOOD.
YEAH? THE ROLLS'LL PROBABLY GET RIPPED OFF WHILE WE'RE GONE.
YOU'RE IN A CHEERFUL MOOD. I THOUGHT YOU WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE BALLET.
Oh, I AM, PETER. I DON'T MEAN TO BE SUCH A GRUMP, I'VE GOT TOO MUCH ON MY MIND.
WOULD TALKING ABOUT THINGS HELP--?
IT'S THESE SERIES OF EXPERIMENTS...
...I'VE BEGUN WITH DOUG RAMSEY--A FRIEND FROM DANCE CLASS--HE'S INTO COMPUTERS, LIKE ME, ONLY HIS SPECIALTY'S SOFTWARE. I'M THE HARDWARE, NUTS'N' BOLTS FREAK. WE'RE TRYING TO--AND LEMME KNOW IF I GET TOO TECHNICAL--WHAT THE HECK!?!
LENIN'S GHOST--AN EXPLOSION!
BOOM!!
I CAN HEAR SCREAMS. PEOPLE ARE INJURED--TRAPPED--UP THERE!
SUMMON THE FIRE BRIGADE, KITTY--
--WHILE I DO WHAT I CAN TO SAVE THEM!
BE CAREFUL, PETER!

A FIRE IS OF LITTLE DANGER TO-- COLOSSUS!
HURRY, KITTY-- LIVES HANG IN THE BALANCE!
THE BUILDING IS DERELICT AND CONDEMNED. THOSE WITHIN MUST BE SQUATTERS, LIVING HERE ILLEGALLY.
I HOPE THERE ARE NOT TOO MANY OF THEM.
WHO IS THIS DOUG RAMSEY?
I DON'T REMEMBER MEETING HIM, KITTY SPEAKS FONDLY OF HIM, THOUGH, SHE MUST LIKE HIM VERY MUCH.
I'VE REACHED THE TOP FLOOR--
-- BUT WHERE IS THE FIRE?!
S'PRISE, SUCKER.
BLOB!?!
AIN'T IT WUNNERFUL WHAT YOU CAN DO THESE DAYS WITH HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS AN' FANCY-DAN SPECIAL EFFECTS?
YOU CAN MAKE A BODY B'LIEVE PRETTY NEAR ANYTHING.
THIS WAS A TRAP!
BRIGHT BOY.
GO T' THE HEAD O' THE CLASS!


WHAT A BLOW-- !!!
BLOB IS NOT STUPID-- OR BRAVE-- ENOUGH TO ATTACK BY HIMSELF. THE REST OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS MUST BE NEARBY.
I MUST KEEP THEM AWAY FROM KITTY!
HUH-- WHUZZAT-- COLOSSUS!
OH, NO!!
A BIRD OF LIVING FIRE!
"THIS IS PYRO'S DOING!"
HOT ENOUGH FOR YOU, COBBER?
I'M AFRAID IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING.
THE CREATURE HAS SUFFICIENT SUBSTANCE TO HOLD ME...
...BUT NOT ENOUGH FOR MY PUNCHES TO AFFECT IT. TRY AS I MIGHT, I CANNOT BREAK FREE!

COLOSSUS CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE AS HE'S HEATED RED-HOT...
...THEN WHITE-HOT, TO INCANDESCENCE AND BEYOND!
HE'S OFTEN WONDERED ABOUT THE UPPER LIMITS OF HIS STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY. CAN HIS STEEL SKIN BE PENETRATED, HIS STEEL BONES BROKEN?
CAN HE MELT?
AND, IF SO, WHAT WILL THAT DO TO HIS HUMAN SELF?
HE PLUMMETS TO EARTH LIKE A BLAZING METEOR...
...THE GROUND SIZZLING WHERE HE LANDS, EVERYTHING NEARBY THAT'S FLAMMABLE BURSTING INSTANTLY TO FLAME.
HE HAS NEVER KNOWN SUCH AGONY.
WHY... DID PYRO'S MONSTER... DROP ME... ???
LIQUID NITROGEN
UNLESS-- ITS EXISTANCE IS MAINTAINED BY PYRO THROUGH FORCE OF WILL. I COULDN'T HURT IT, BUT MY RESISTANCE MUST HAVE AFFECTED HIM THROUGH THAT PSILINK, WORN HIM OUT!
MYSTIQUE AND DESTINY... ARE NO REAL THREAT TO ME, EVEN... WEAK AS I AM. BUT AVALANCHE IS... ANOTHER MATTER. I MUST... GATHER MY WITS BEFORE HE--OR THE OTHERS--STRIKE!


LOOK AT THE RUSSIAN, TRYING TO STAND! YOU HAVE TO GIVE HIM CREDIT, PYRO--HE'S TOUGH!
SEEMS ALMOST A SHAME TO FINISH HIM LIKE THIS.
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO SOMETHING AS HOT AS YOU'VE MADE COLOSSUS DUNKED INTO NEAR ABSOLUTE ZERO COLD?
WATCH CLOSELY, MY FRIEND, BECAUSE WE'RE ABOUT TO LEARN!
ARRGH!
WITH HIS MUTANT POWER, AVALANCHE SWEEPS TRUCKS CONTAINING LIQUID NITROGEN (MINUS 346° F) TOWARDS THE UNSUSPECTING X-MAN.
THE TANKERS RUPTURE ON IMPACT.
PETER!

PETER!!
NEXT:
HELL HATH NO FURY...

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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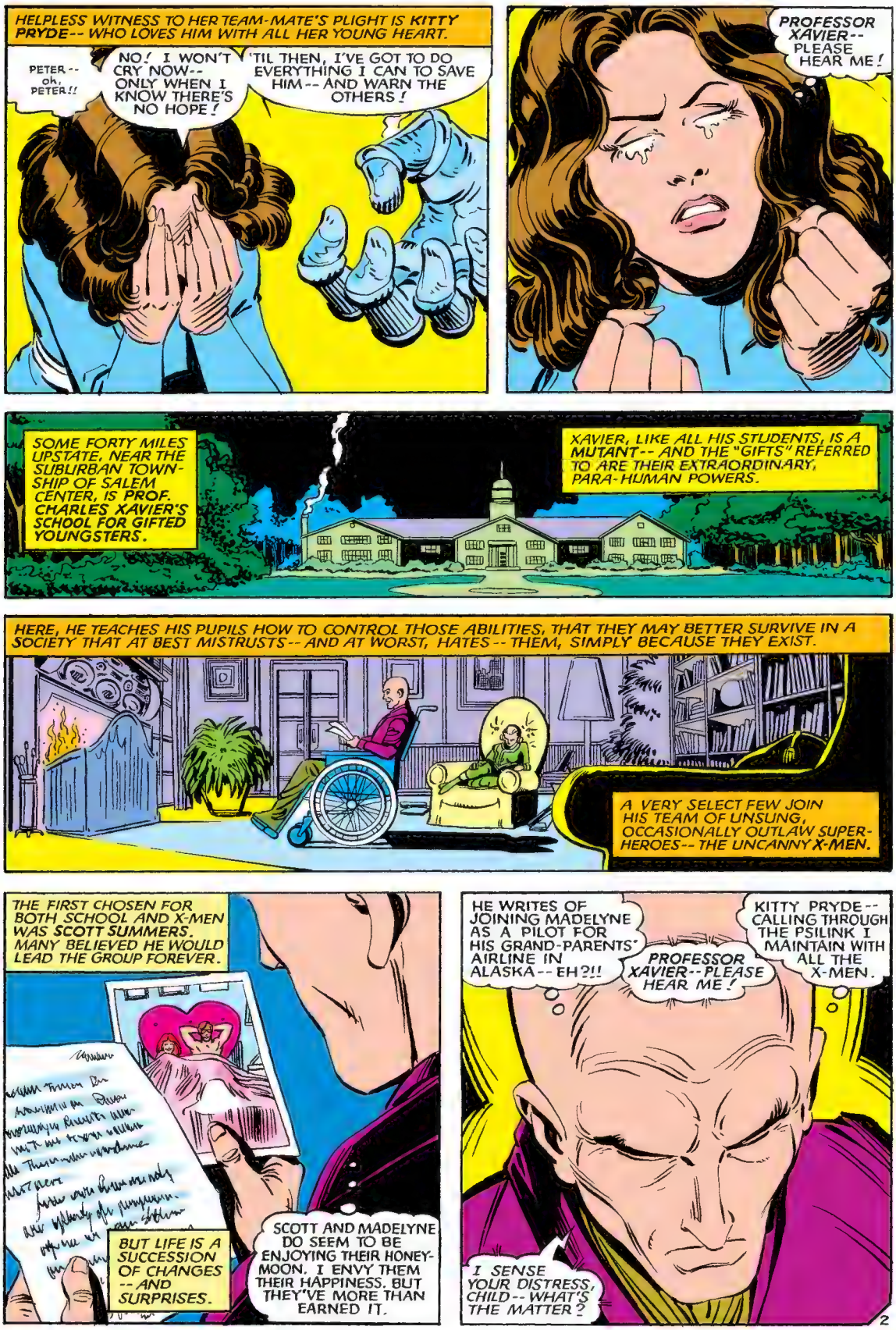
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JIM PANTHER + DAN GREEN

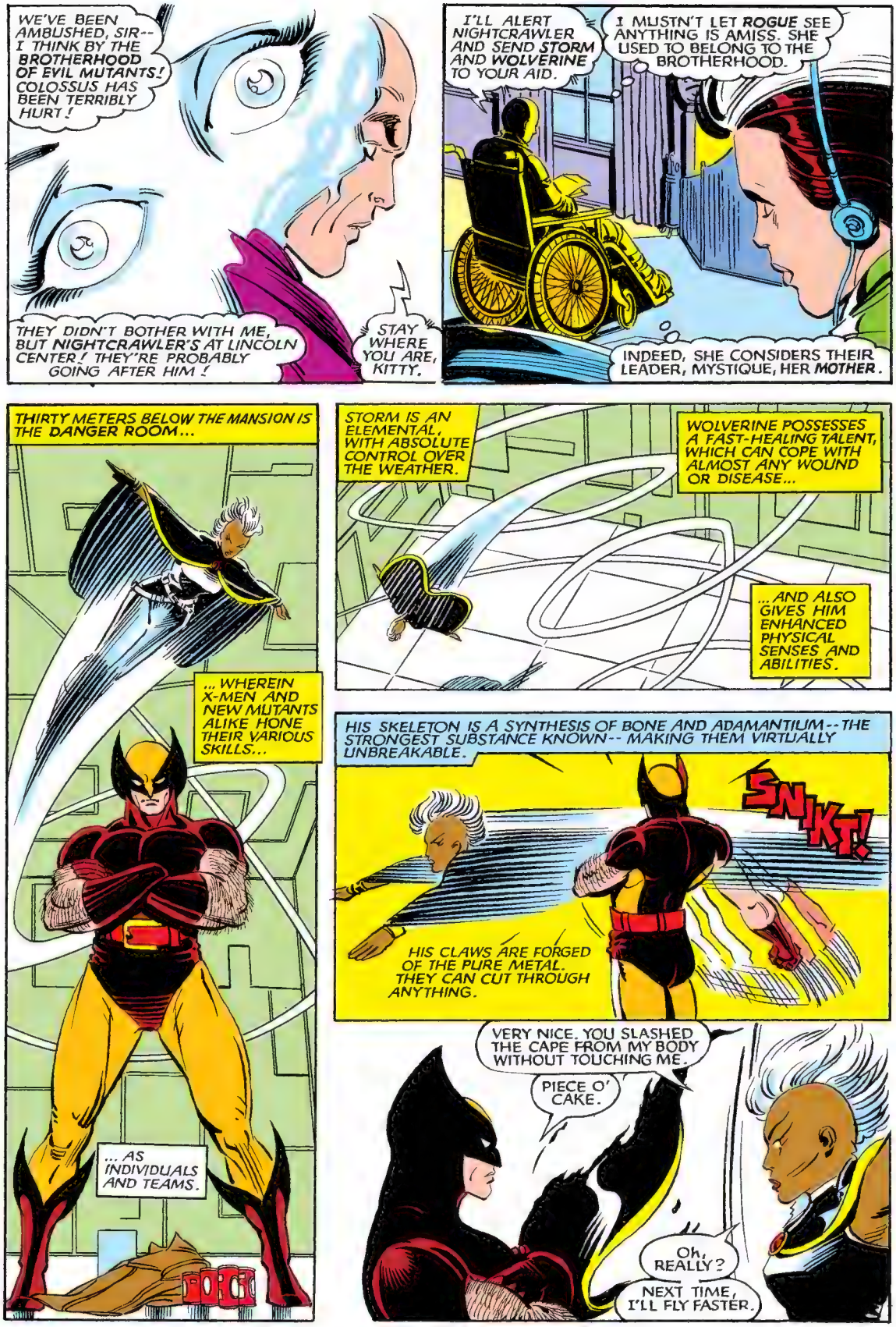
HEAT METAL WHITE-HOT, THEN SUBJECT IT TO NEAR ABSOLUTE-ZERO COLD-- A TEMPERATURE SO LOW THAT MOLECULAR MOTION VIRTUALLY CEASES-- AND THAT METAL BLISTERS, CRACKS, ULTIMATELY SHATTERS.
THAT IS WHAT'S JUST HAPPENED TO COLOSSUS, IN THIS CONSTRUCTION SITE ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN.
FOR A MAN COMPOSED, AS HE IS, OF ORGANIC STEEL, THE PROCESS WOULD SURELY SEEM TO MEAN CERTAIN DEATH.

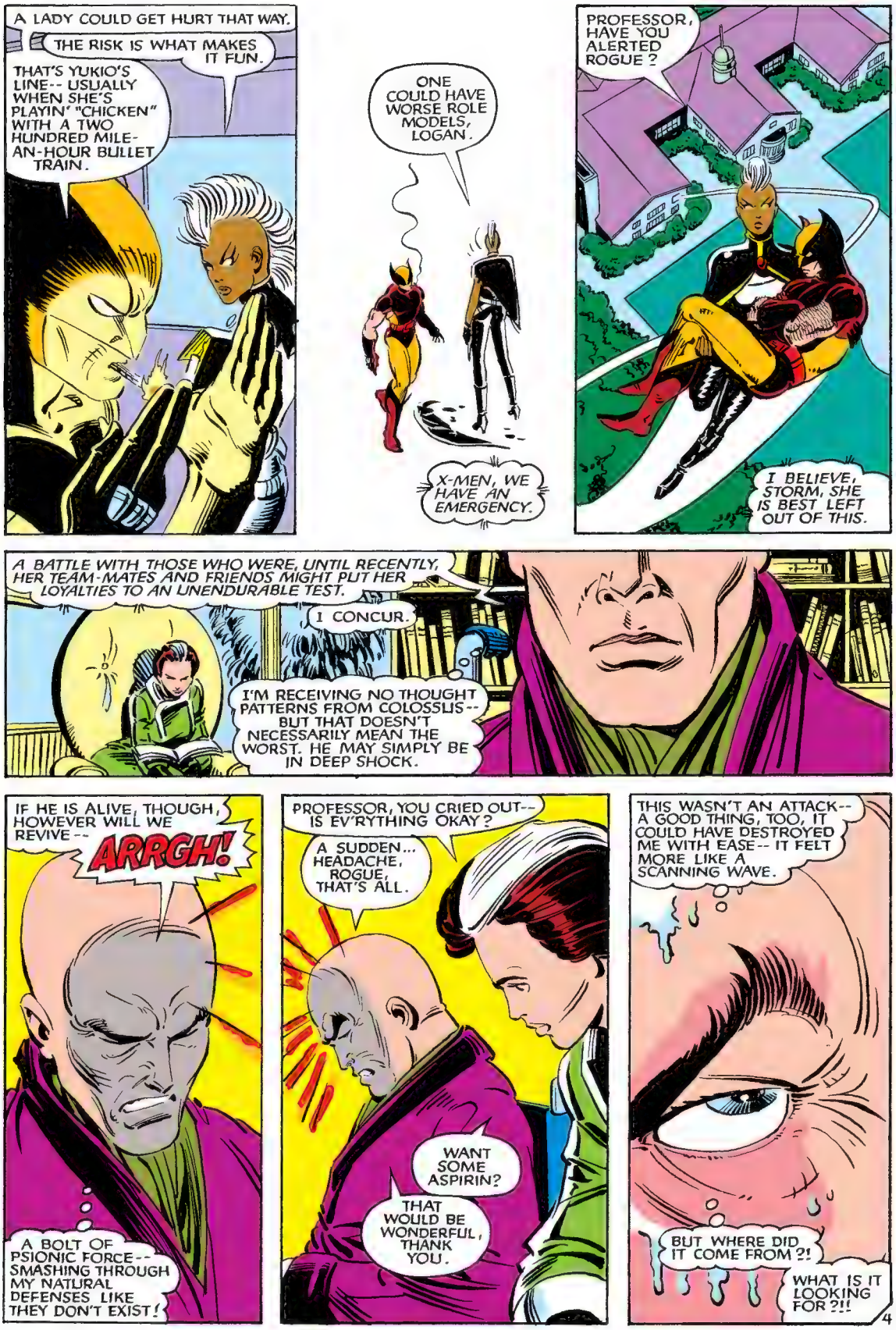
HELL HATH NO FURY...

A **STAN LEE** PRESENTATION, STARRING THE UNCANNY **X-MEN** -- AS CHRONICLED BY

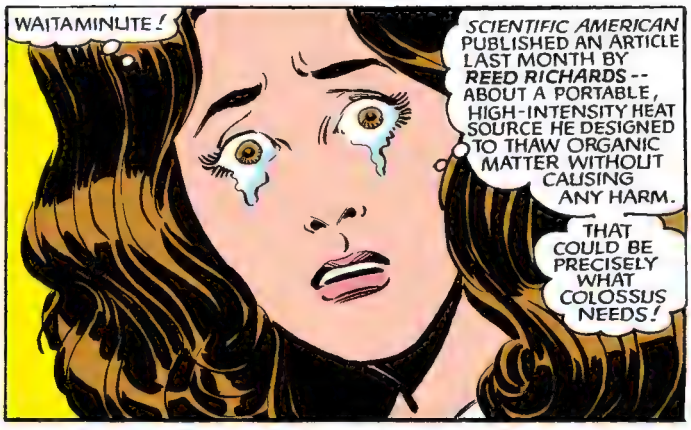
CHRIS CLAREMONT	JOHN ROMITA, Jr.	BOB WIACEK & BRETT BREEDING	GLYNIS WEIN	TOM ORZECHOWSKI	LOUISE JONES	JIM SHOOTER
writer	*penciler*	*inkers*	*colorist*	*letterer*	*editor*	*chief*

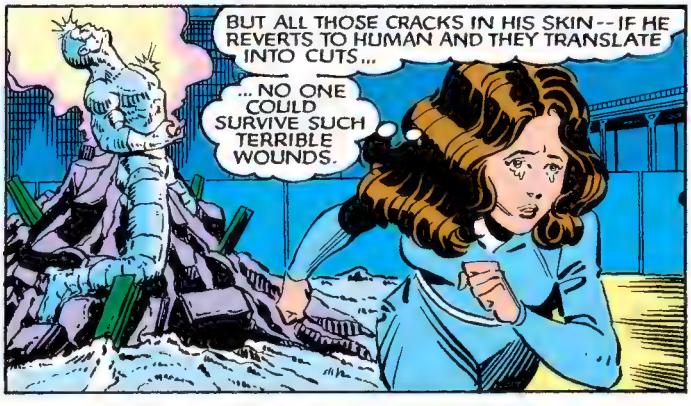

HELPLESS WITNESS TO HER TEAM-MATE'S PLIGHT IS KITTY PRYDE-- WHO LOVES HIM WITH ALL HER YOUNG HEART.
PETER-- oh, PETER!!
NO! I WON'T CRY NOW-- ONLY WHEN I KNOW THERE'S NO HOPE!
'TIL THEN, I'VE GOT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO SAVE HIM-- AND WARN THE OTHERS!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- PLEASE HEAR ME!
SOME FORTY MILES UPSTATE, NEAR THE SUBURBAN TOWNSHIP OF SALEM CENTER, IS PROF. CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
XAVIER, LIKE ALL HIS STUDENTS, IS A MUTANT-- AND THE "GIFTS" REFERRED TO ARE THEIR EXTRAORDINARY, PARA-HUMAN POWERS.
HERE, HE TEACHES HIS PUPILS HOW TO CONTROL THOSE ABILITIES, THAT THEY MAY BETTER SURVIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT AT BEST MISTRUSTS-- AND AT WORST, HATES-- THEM, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY EXIST.
A VERY SELECT FEW JOIN HIS TEAM OF UNSUNG, OCCASIONALLY OUTLAW SUPER-HEROES-- THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
THE FIRST CHOSEN FOR BOTH SCHOOL AND X-MEN WAS SCOTT SUMMERS. MANY BELIEVED HE WOULD LEAD THE GROUP FOREVER.
BUT LIFE IS A SUCCESSION OF CHANGES -- AND SURPRISES.
SCOTT AND MADELYNE DO SEEM TO BE ENJOYING THEIR HONEYMOON. I ENVY THEM THEIR HAPPINESS. BUT THEY'VE MORE THAN EARNED IT.
HE WRITES OF JOINING MADELYNE AS A PILOT FOR HIS GRAND-PARENTS' AIRLINE IN ALASKA-- EH?!!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- PLEASE HEAR ME!
KITTY PRYDE-- CALLING THROUGH THE PSILINK I MAINTAIN WITH ALL THE X-MEN.
I SENSE YOUR DISTRESS, CHILD-- WHAT'S THE MATTER?
2

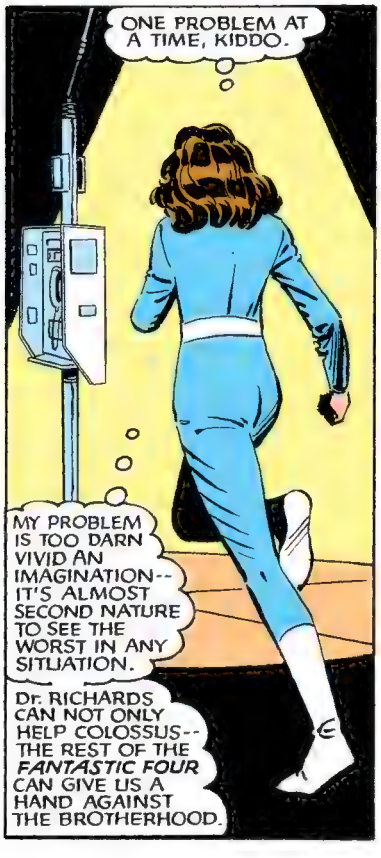

WE'VE BEEN AMBUSHED, SIR-- I THINK BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS! COLOSSUS HAS BEEN TERRIBLY HURT!
THEY DIDN'T BOTHER WITH ME, BUT NIGHTCRAWLER'S AT LINCOLN CENTER! THEY'RE PROBABLY GOING AFTER HIM!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, KITTY.
I'LL ALERT NIGHTCRAWLER AND SEND STORM AND WOLVERINE TO YOUR AID.
I MUSTN'T LET ROGUE SEE ANYTHING IS AMISS. SHE USED TO BELONG TO THE BROTHERHOOD.
INDEED, SHE CONSIDERS THEIR LEADER, MYSTIQUE, HER MOTHER.
THIRTY METERS BELOW THE MANSION IS THE DANGER ROOM...
... WHEREIN X-MEN AND NEW MUTANTS ALIKE HONE THEIR VARIOUS SKILLS...
... AS INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS.
STORM IS AN ELEMENTAL, WITH ABSOLUTE CONTROL OVER THE WEATHER.
WOLVERINE POSSESSES A FAST-HEALING TALENT, WHICH CAN COPE WITH ALMOST ANY WOUND OR DISEASE...
... AND ALSO GIVES HIM ENHANCED PHYSICAL SENSES AND ABILITIES.
HIS SKELETON IS A SYNTHESIS OF BONE AND ADAMANTIUM--THE STRONGEST SUBSTANCE KNOWN-- MAKING THEM VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.
SNIKT!
HIS CLAWS ARE FORGED OF THE PURE METAL. THEY CAN CUT THROUGH ANYTHING.
VERY NICE. YOU SLASHED THE CAPE FROM MY BODY WITHOUT TOUCHING ME.
PIECE O' CAKE.
Oh, REALLY?
NEXT TIME, I'LL FLY FASTER.

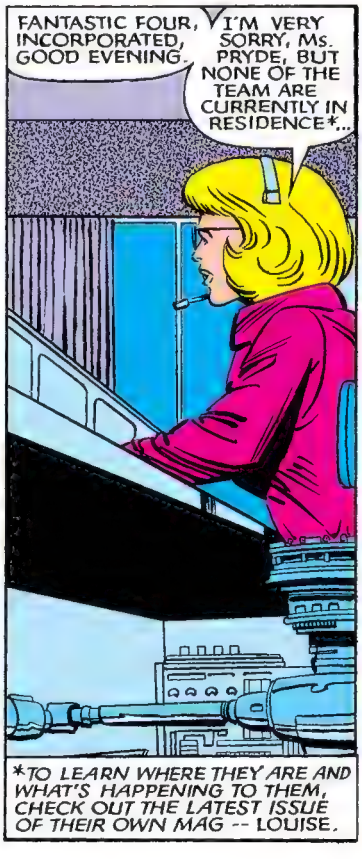

A LADY COULD GET HURT THAT WAY.
THE RISK IS WHAT MAKES IT FUN.
THAT'S YUKIO'S LINE-- USUALLY WHEN SHE'S PLAYIN' "CHICKEN" WITH A TWO HUNDRED MILE-AN-HOUR BULLET TRAIN.
ONE COULD HAVE WORSE ROLE MODELS, LOGAN.
X-MEN, WE HAVE AN EMERGENCY.
PROFESSOR, HAVE YOU ALERTED ROGUE ?
I BELIEVE, STORM, SHE IS BEST LEFT OUT OF THIS.
A BATTLE WITH THOSE WHO WERE, UNTIL RECENTLY, HER TEAM-MATES AND FRIENDS MIGHT PUT HER LOYALTIES TO AN UNENDURABLE TEST.
I CONCUR.
I'M RECEIVING NO THOUGHT PATTERNS FROM COLOSSUS-- BUT THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THE WORST. HE MAY SIMPLY BE IN DEEP SHOCK.
IF HE IS ALIVE, THOUGH, HOWEVER WILL WE REVIVE --
ARRGH!
A BOLT OF PSIONIC FORCE-- SMASHING THROUGH MY NATURAL DEFENSES LIKE THEY DON'T EXIST!
PROFESSOR, YOU CRIED OUT-- IS EV'RYTHING OKAY?
A SUDDEN... HEADACHE, ROGUE, THAT'S ALL.
WANT SOME ASPIRIN?
THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL, THANK YOU.
THIS WASN'T AN ATTACK-- A GOOD THING, TOO, IT COULD HAVE DESTROYED ME WITH EASE-- IT FELT MORE LIKE A SCANNING WAVE.
BUT WHERE DID IT COME FROM ?!
WHAT IS IT LOOKING FOR ?!!

MEANWHILE...
MY PHASING POWER WON'T BE MUCH USE AGAINST THE BROTHERHOOD. IF I JOIN THE FIGHT, THE OTHER X-MEN'LL BE TOO BUSY LOOKING OUT FOR ME TO LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES.
BUT I CAN'T JUST STAY HERE, DOING NOTHING, NO MATTER WHAT I'M TOLD!

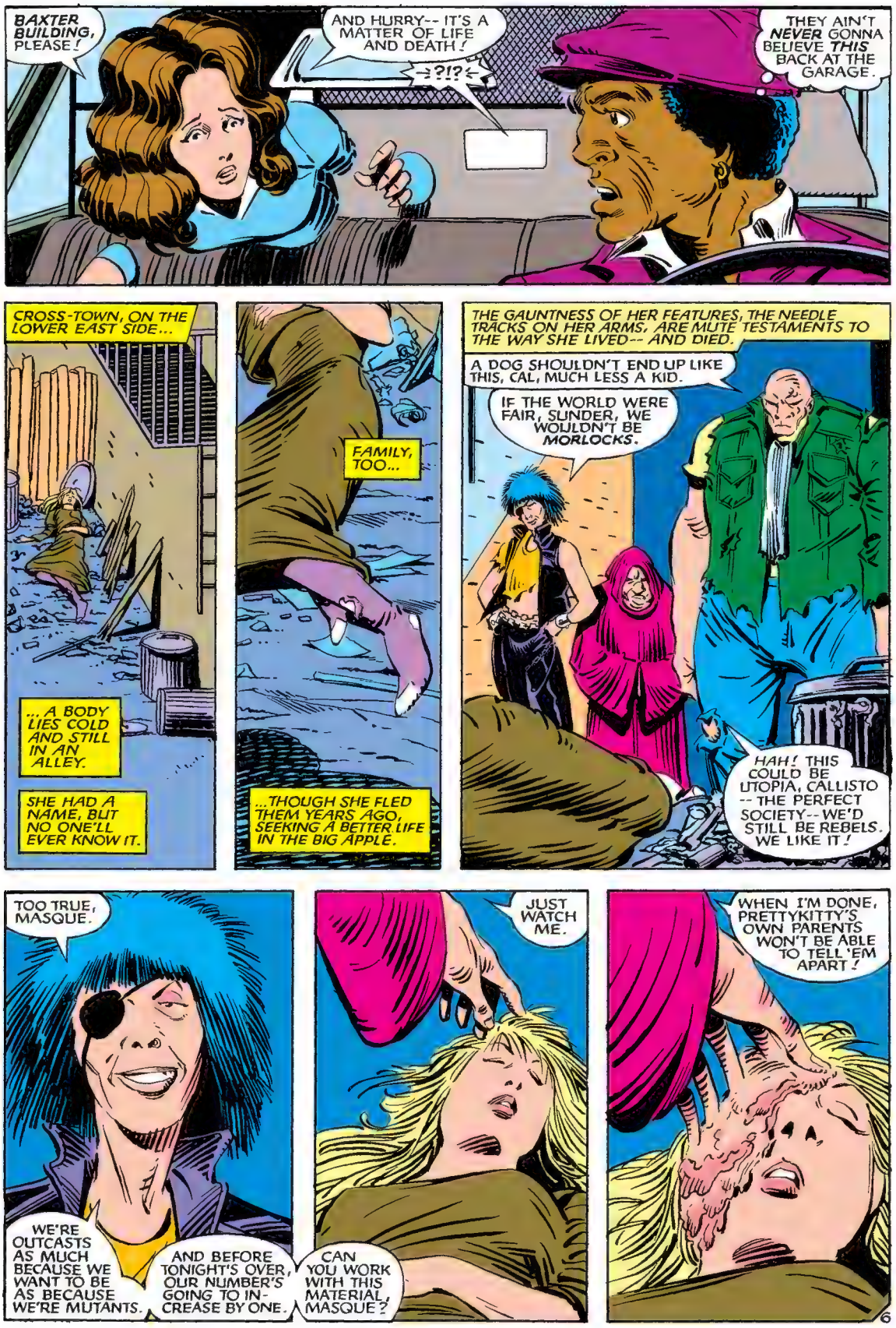

WAITAMINUTE!
SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE LAST MONTH BY REED RICHARDS -- ABOUT A PORTABLE, HIGH-INTENSITY HEAT SOURCE HE DESIGNED TO THAW ORGANIC MATTER WITHOUT CAUSING ANY HARM.
THAT COULD BE PRECISELY WHAT COLOSSUS NEEDS!

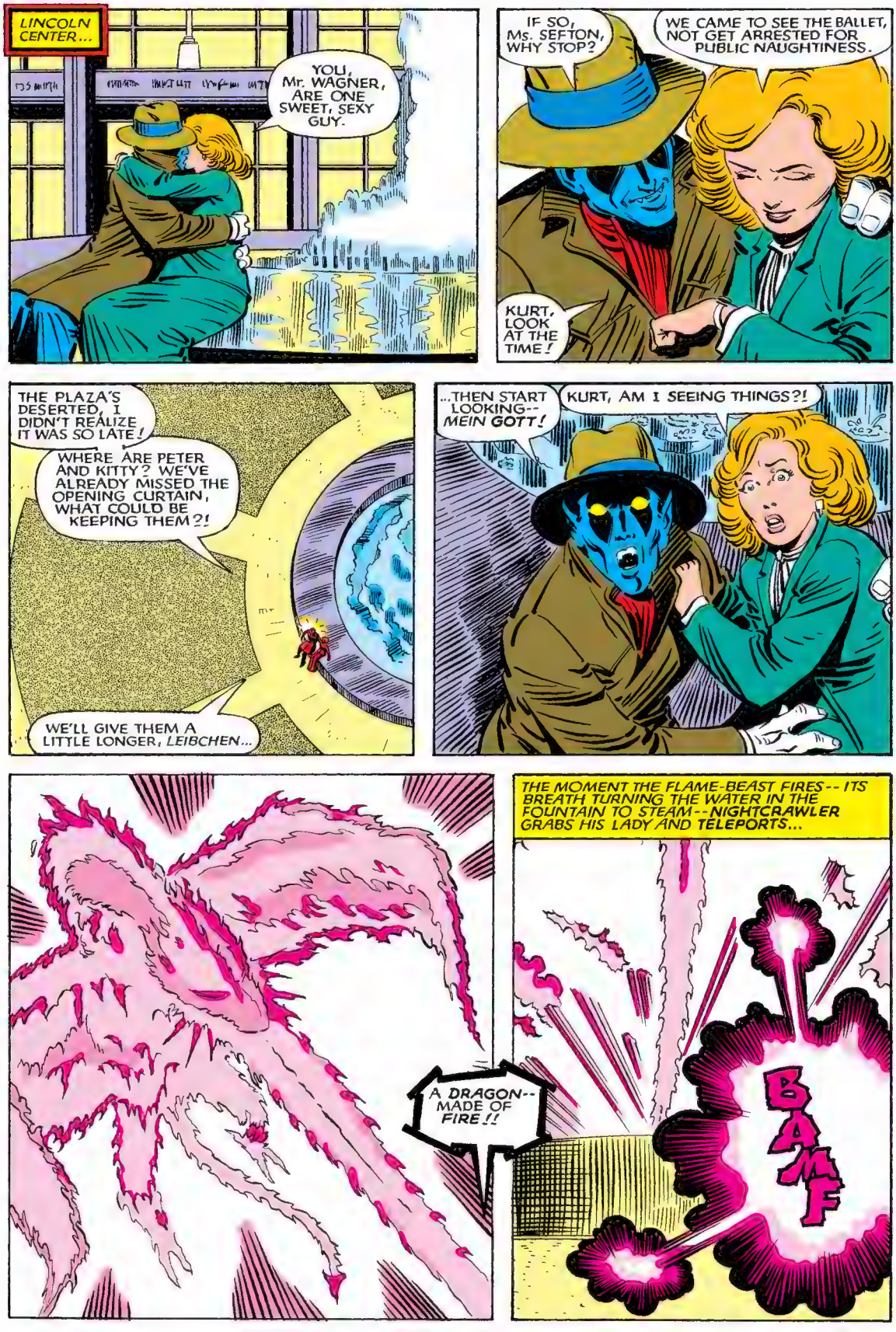

BUT ALL THOSE CRACKS IN HIS SKIN -- IF HE REVERTS TO HUMAN AND THEY TRANSLATE INTO CUTS...
... NO ONE COULD SURVIVE SUCH TERRIBLE WOUNDS.

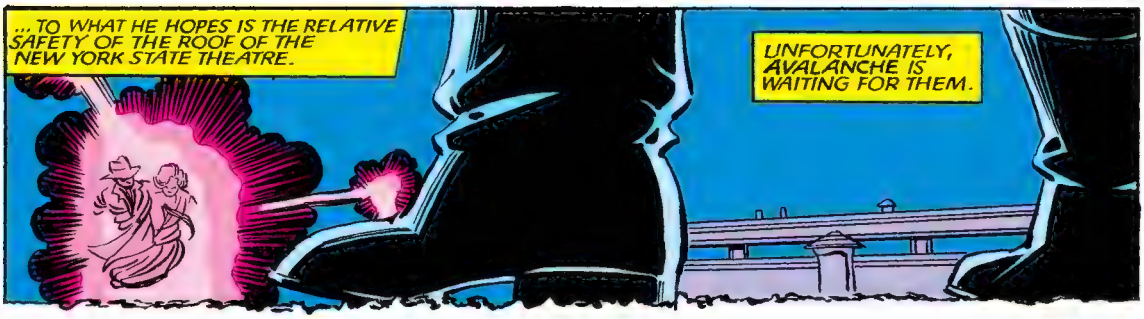

ONE PROBLEM AT A TIME, KIDDO.
MY PROBLEM IS TOO DARN VIVID AN IMAGINATION -- IT'S ALMOST SECOND NATURE TO SEE THE WORST IN ANY SITUATION.
Dr. RICHARDS CAN NOT ONLY HELP COLOSSUS -- THE REST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR CAN GIVE US A HAND AGAINST THE BROTHERHOOD.

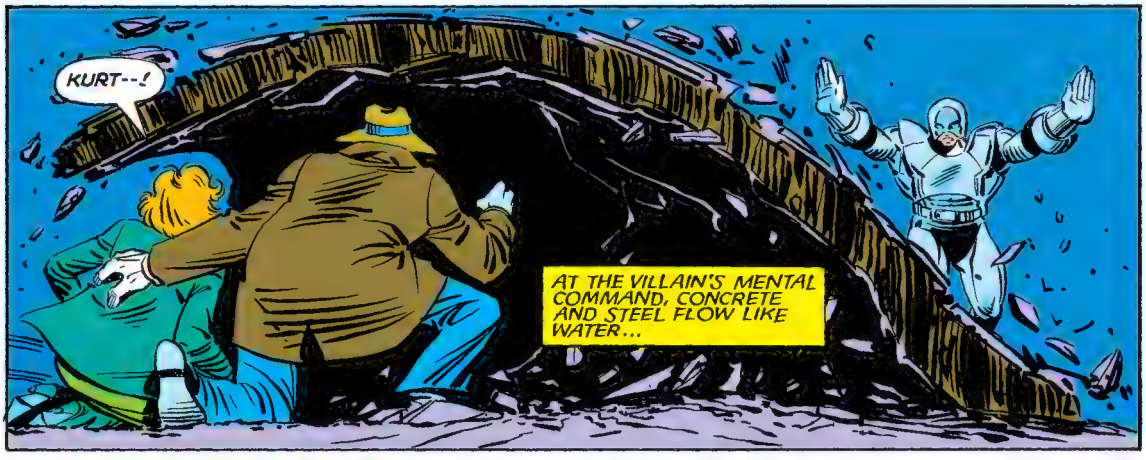

FANTASTIC FOUR, INCORPORATED, GOOD EVENING.
I'M VERY SORRY, Ms. PRYDE, BUT NONE OF THE TEAM ARE CURRENTLY IN RESIDENCE*...
*TO LEARN WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM, CHECK OUT THE LATEST ISSUE OF THEIR OWN MAG -- LOUISE.

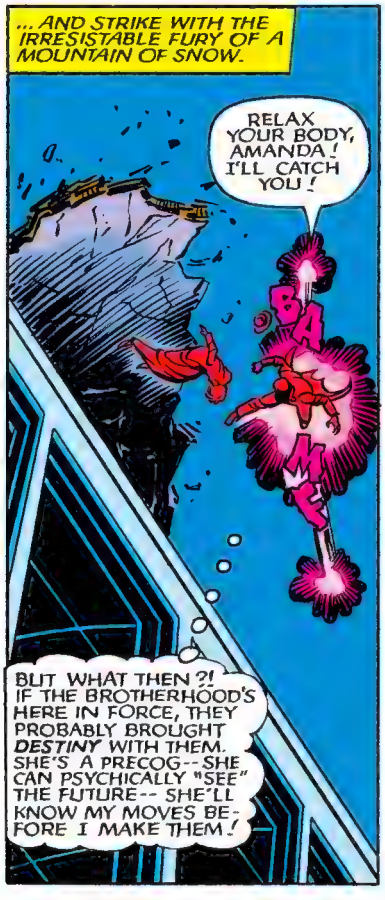
GREAT. IT ALWAYS HAPPENS THIS WAY. WHEN YOU NEED SOMEONE THE MOST, THEY'RE OFF ON SOME STUPID MISSION.
MAYBE I CAN GET AHOLD OF THE GIZMO AND FIGURE OUT HOW IT WORKS FOR MYSELF.
IT'S WORTH A TRY, ANYWAY.
TAXI! HEY, TAXI!!

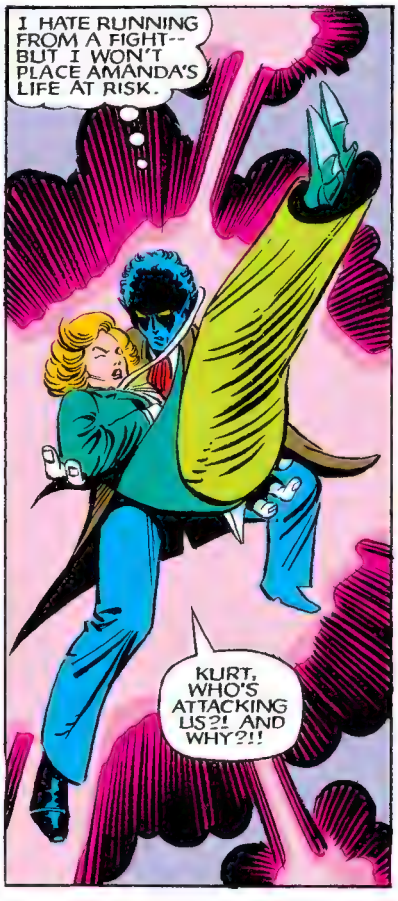

BAXTER BUILDING, PLEASE!
AND HURRY-- IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
-?!?-
THEY AIN'T NEVER GONNA BELIEVE THIS BACK AT THE GARAGE.
CROSS-TOWN, ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE...
...A BODY LIES COLD AND STILL IN AN ALLEY.
SHE HAD A NAME, BUT NO ONE'LL EVER KNOW IT.
FAMILY, TOO...
...THOUGH SHE FLED THEM YEARS AGO, SEEKING A BETTER LIFE IN THE BIG APPLE.
THE GAUNTNESS OF HER FEATURES, THE NEEDLE TRACKS ON HER ARMS, ARE MUTE TESTAMENTS TO THE WAY SHE LIVED-- AND DIED.
A DOG SHOULDN'T END UP LIKE THIS, CAL, MUCH LESS A KID.
IF THE WORLD WERE FAIR, SUNDER, WE WOULDN'T BE MORLOCKS.
HAH! THIS COULD BE UTOPIA, CALLISTO -- THE PERFECT SOCIETY-- WE'D STILL BE REBELS. WE LIKE IT!
TOO TRUE, MASQUE.
WE'RE OUTCASTS AS MUCH BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE AS BECAUSE WE'RE MUTANTS.
AND BEFORE TONIGHT'S OVER, OUR NUMBER'S GOING TO INCREASE BY ONE.
CAN YOU WORK WITH THIS MATERIAL, MASQUE?
JUST WATCH ME.
WHEN I'M DONE, PRETTYKITTY'S OWN PARENTS WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL 'EM APART!


LINCOLN CENTER...
YOU, Mr. WAGNER, ARE ONE SWEET, SEXY GUY.
IF SO, Ms. SEFTON, WHY STOP?
WE CAME TO SEE THE BALLET, NOT GET ARRESTED FOR PUBLIC NAUGHTINESS.
KURT, LOOK AT THE TIME!
THE PLAZA'S DESERTED, I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO LATE!
WHERE ARE PETER AND KITTY? WE'VE ALREADY MISSED THE OPENING CURTAIN, WHAT COULD BE KEEPING THEM?!
WE'LL GIVE THEM A LITTLE LONGER, LEIBCHEN...
...THEN START LOOKING-- MEIN GOTT!
KURT, AM I SEEING THINGS?!
A DRAGON-- MADE OF FIRE!!
THE MOMENT THE FLAME-BEAST FIRES-- ITS BREATH TURNING THE WATER IN THE FOUNTAIN TO STEAM--NIGHTCRAWLER GRABS HIS LADY AND TELEPORTS...
BAMF

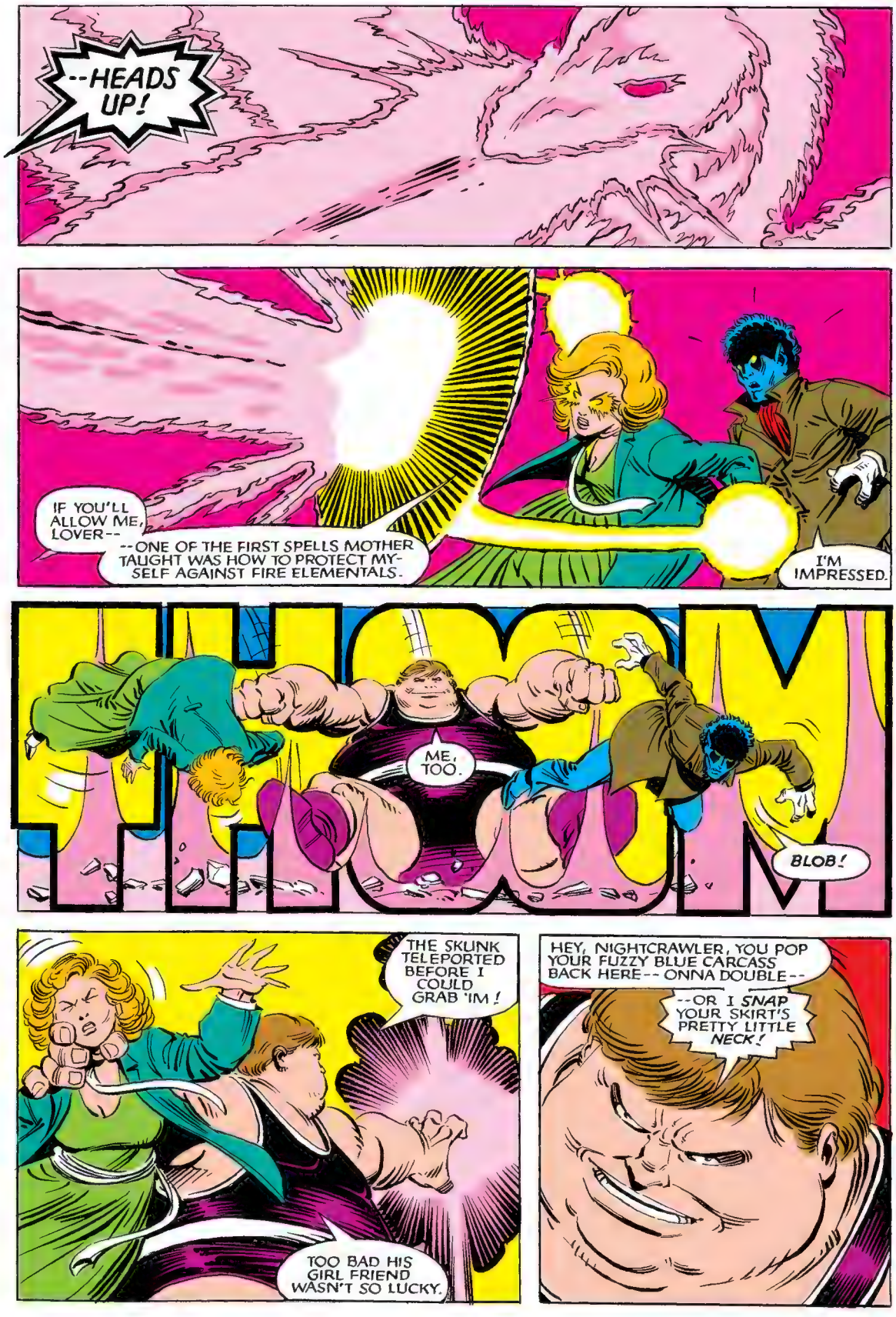

...TO WHAT HE HOPES IS THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF THE ROOF OF THE NEW YORK STATE THEATRE.
UNFORTUNATELY, AVALANCHE IS WAITING FOR THEM.


KURT--!
AT THE VILLAIN'S MENTAL COMMAND, CONCRETE AND STEEL FLOW LIKE WATER...

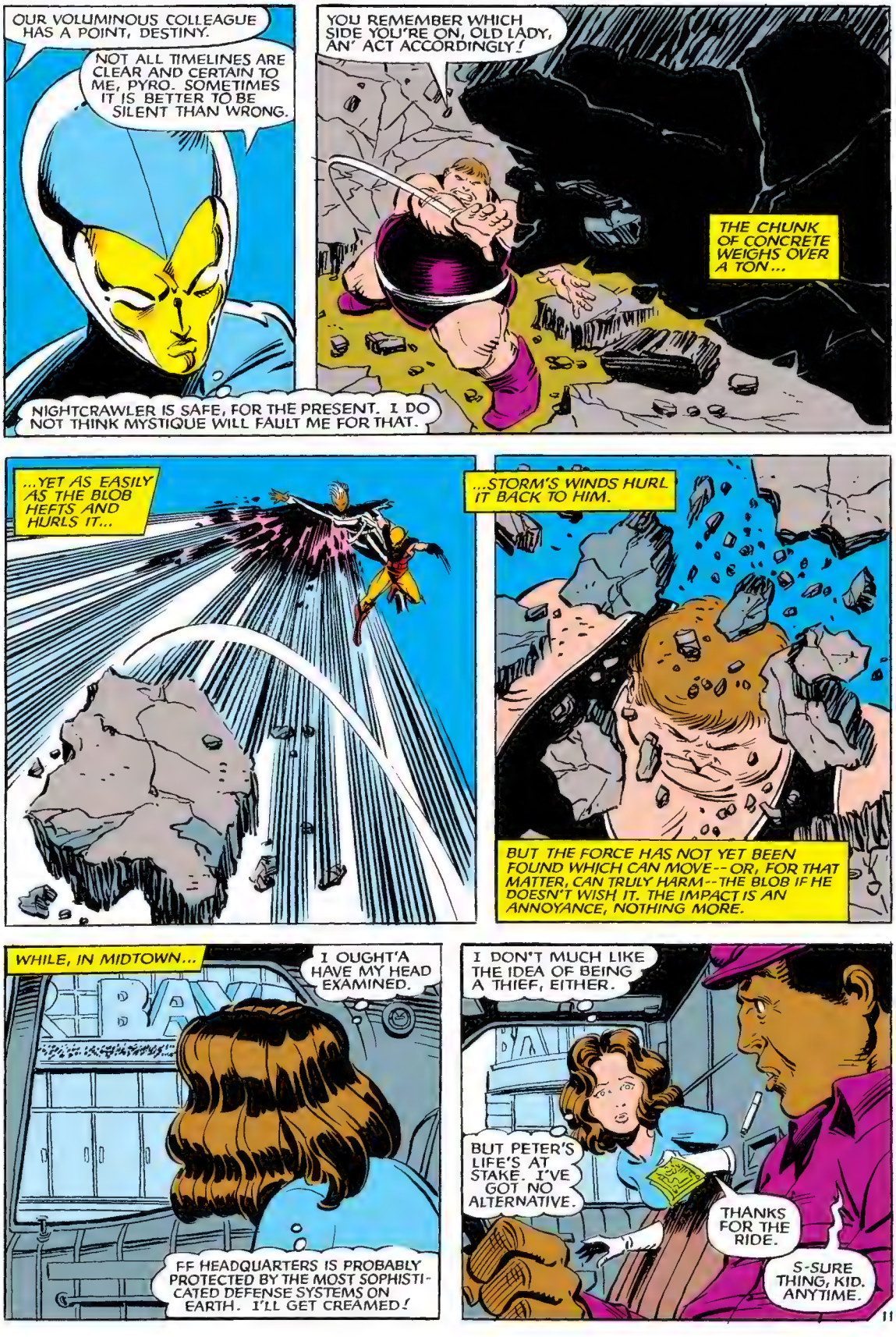

...AND STRIKE WITH THE IRRESISTABLE FURY OF A MOUNTAIN OF SNOW.
RELAX YOUR BODY, AMANDA! I'LL CATCH YOU!
BA
ME
BUT WHAT THEN?! IF THE BROTHERHOOD'S HERE IN FORCE, THEY PROBABLY BROUGHT DESTINY WITH THEM. SHE'S A PRECOG--SHE CAN PSYCHICALLY "SEE" THE FUTURE-- SHE'LL KNOW MY MOVES BEFORE I MAKE THEM!

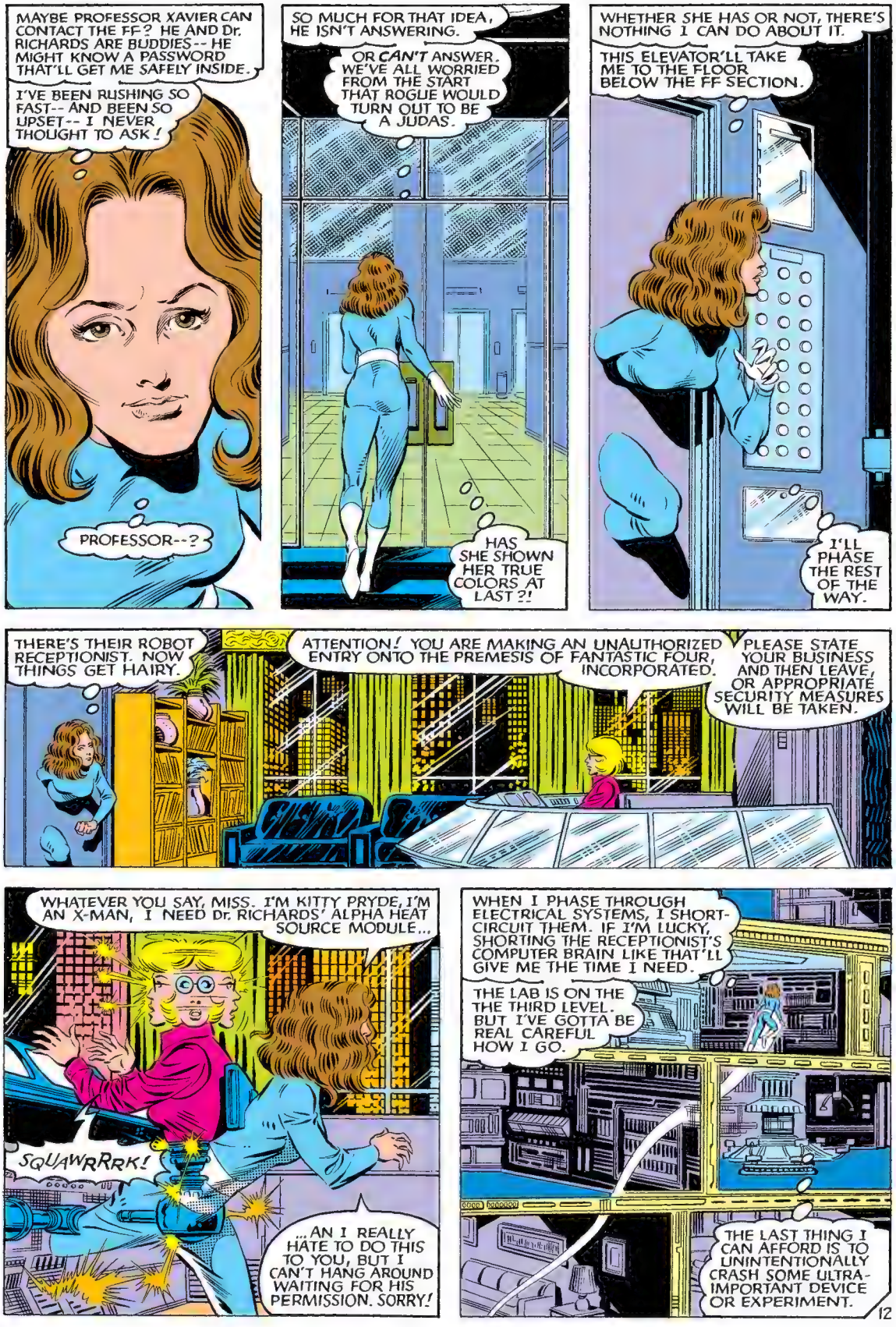

I HATE RUNNING FROM A FIGHT-- BUT I WON'T PLACE AMANDA'S LIFE AT RISK.
KURT, WHO'S ATTACKING US?! AND WHY?!!

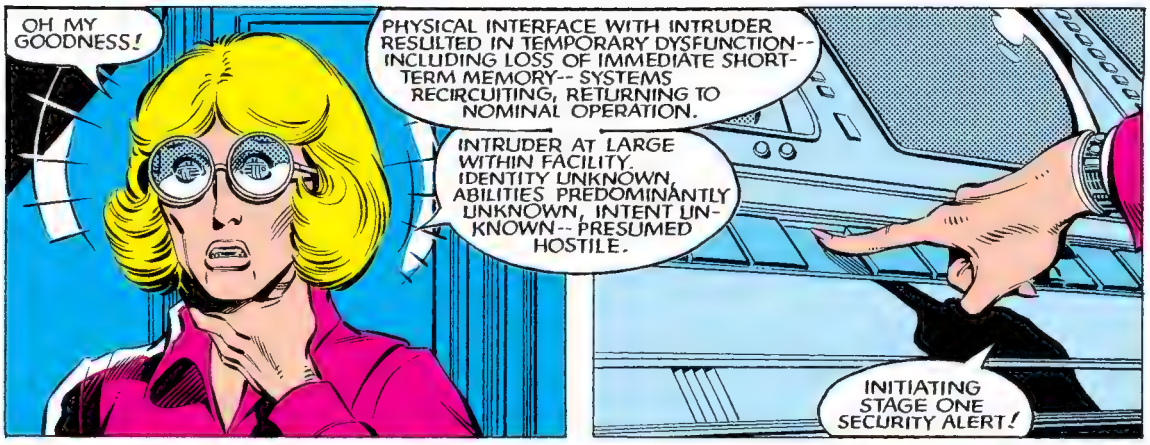
THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS--SORT OF THE X-MEN'S OPPOSITE NUMBER. I ASSUME THEY'RE OUT TO SETTLE OLD SCORES.
UNLESS... THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ROGUE!
NIGHTCRAWLER, ALERT! YOU ARE IN IMMINANT DANGER OF ATTACK...
DANKE, PROFESSOR. I ONLY WISH YOUR WARNING HAD COME A MINUTE SOONER.
NIGHT-CRAWLER--

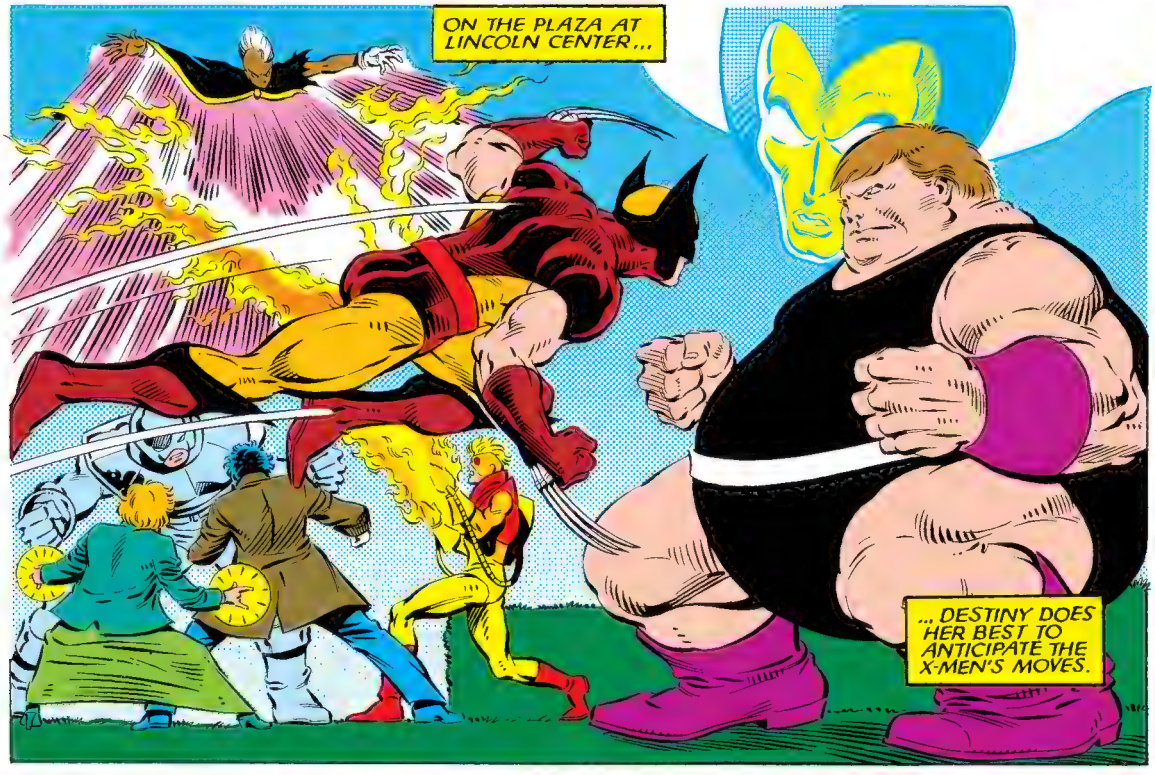

--HEADS UP!
IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME, LOVER--
--ONE OF THE FIRST SPELLS MOTHER TAUGHT WAS HOW TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST FIRE ELEMENTALS.
I'M IMPRESSED.
HMM
ME, TOO.
BLOB!
THE SKUNK TELEPORTED BEFORE I COULD GRAB 'IM!
TOO BAD HIS GIRL FRIEND WASN'T SO LUCKY.
HEY, NIGHTCRAWLER, YOU POP YOUR FUZZY BLUE CARCASS BACK HERE-- ONNA DOUBLE--
--OR I SNAP YOUR SKIRT'S PRETTY LITTLE NECK!

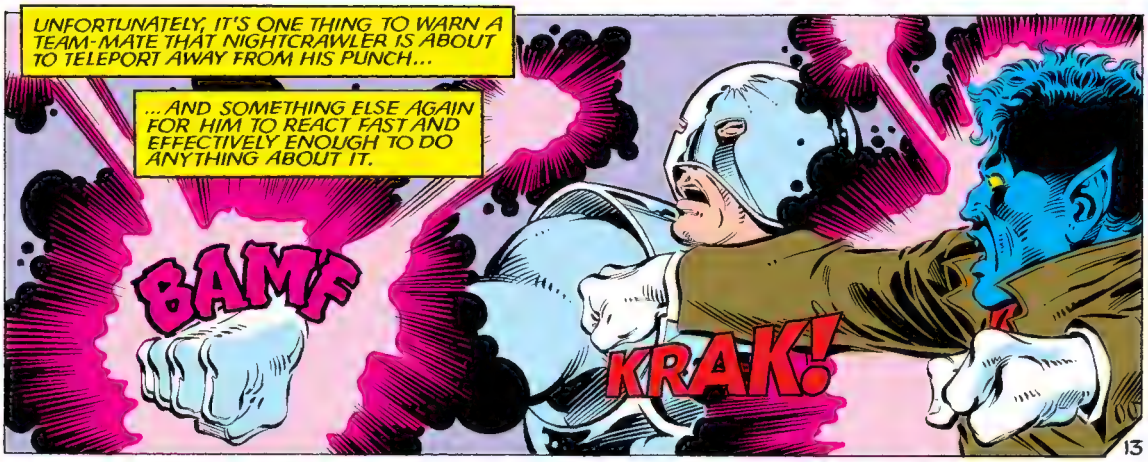
SMART BOY. I FIGURED YOU'D SEE THINGS MY WAY.
I SURRENDER, BLOB.
LET HER GO, AS YOU PROMISED.
SO I LIED.
IF YOU VALUE YOUR OWN HEALTH, BLOB--
YEEEOW!
--RELEASE THEM BOTH!
I WUZ WUN'DRIN' WHEN THE CAVALRY'D SHOW.
DROP ME ANYWHERE, DARLIN'--AN' THEN STAY OUTTA MY ROAD--
--THAT FAT SLOB'S MINE!
I WILL PLACE YOU WHERE YOU'LL DO THE MOST GOOD, WOLVERINE, AND AT THE MOMENT I THINK BEST.
DESTINY! YOU'RE S'POSED TA KNOW THESE THINGS, WOMAN!
HOWCUM YOU DIDN'T WARN US THEY WERE COMIN'?
BAM!

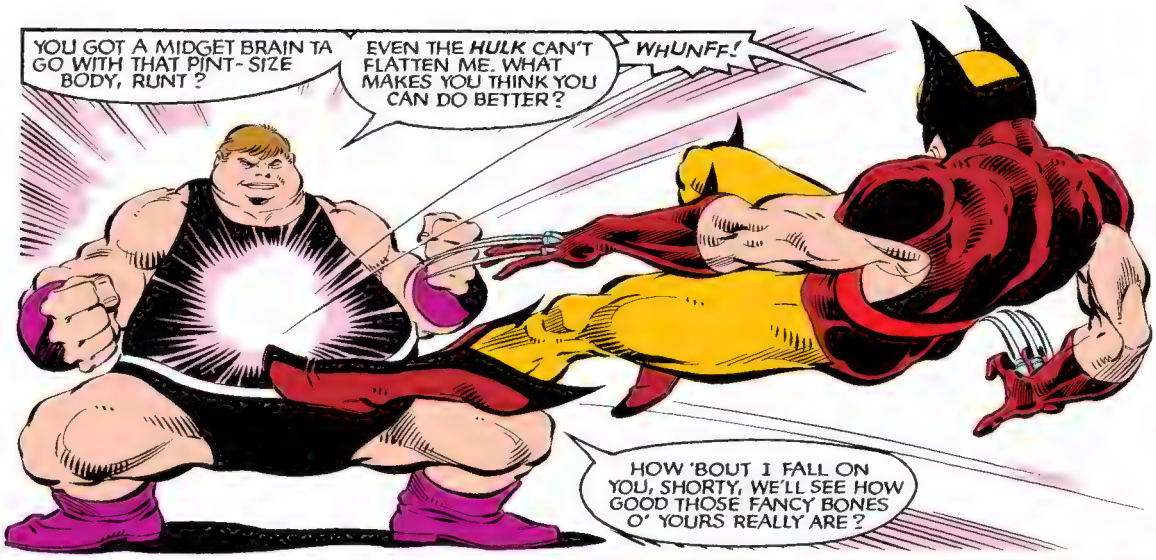

OUR VOLUMINOUS COLLEAGUE HAS A POINT, DESTINY.
NOT ALL TIMELINES ARE CLEAR AND CERTAIN TO ME, PYRO. SOMETIMES IT IS BETTER TO BE SILENT THAN WRONG.
NIGHTCRAWLER IS SAFE, FOR THE PRESENT. I DO NOT THINK MYSTIQUE WILL FAULT ME FOR THAT.
YOU REMEMBER WHICH SIDE YOU'RE ON, OLD LADY, AN' ACT ACCORDINGLY!
THE CHUNK OF CONCRETE WEIGHS OVER A TON...
...YET AS EASILY AS THE BLOB HEFTS AND HURLS IT...
...STORM'S WINDS HURL IT BACK TO HIM.
BUT THE FORCE HAS NOT YET BEEN FOUND WHICH CAN MOVE--OR, FOR THAT MATTER, CAN TRULY HARM--THE BLOB IF HE DOESN'T WISH IT. THE IMPACT IS AN ANNOYANCE, NOTHING MORE.
WHILE, IN MIDTOWN...
I OUGHT'A HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED.
FF HEADQUARTERS IS PROBABLY PROTECTED BY THE MOST SOPHISTICATED DEFENSE SYSTEMS ON EARTH. I'LL GET CREAMED!
I DON'T MUCH LIKE THE IDEA OF BEING A THIEF, EITHER.
BUT PETER'S LIFE'S AT STAKE. I'VE GOT NO ALTERNATIVE.
THANKS FOR THE RIDE.
S-SURE THING, KID. ANYTIME.

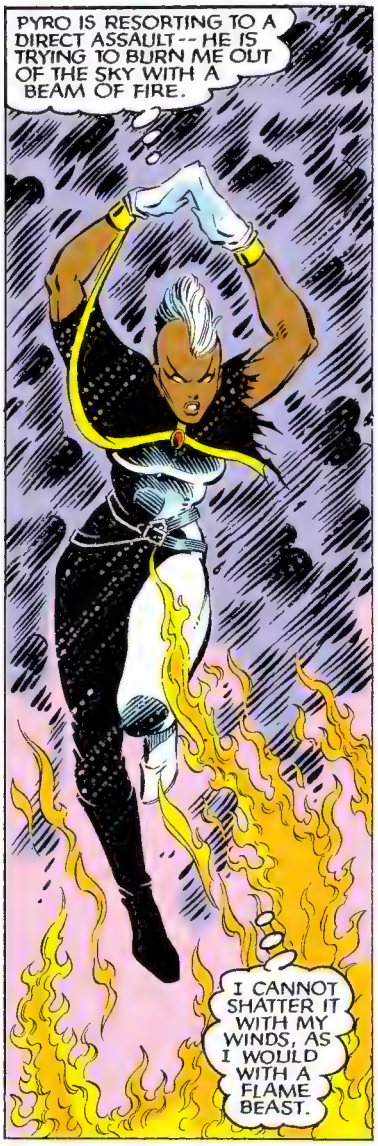

MAYBE PROFESSOR XAVIER CAN CONTACT THE FF? HE AND Dr. RICHARDS ARE BUDDIES-- HE MIGHT KNOW A PASSWORD THAT'LL GET ME SAFELY INSIDE.
I'VE BEEN RUSHING SO FAST-- AND BEEN SO UPSET-- I NEVER THOUGHT TO ASK!
PROFESSOR--?
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA, HE ISN'T ANSWERING.
OR CAN'T ANSWER. WE'VE ALL WORRIED FROM THE START THAT ROGUE WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A JUDAS.
HAS SHE SHOWN HER TRUE COLORS AT LAST?!
WHETHER SHE HAS OR NOT, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THIS ELEVATOR'LL TAKE ME TO THE FLOOR BELOW THE FF SECTION.
I'LL PHASE THE REST OF THE WAY.
THERE'S THEIR ROBOT RECEPTIONIST. NOW THINGS GET HAIRY.
ATTENTION! YOU ARE MAKING AN UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY ONTO THE PREMESIS OF FANTASTIC FOUR, INCORPORATED.
PLEASE STATE YOUR BUSINESS AND THEN LEAVE, OR APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN.
WHATEVER YOU SAY, MISS. I'M KITTY PRYDE, I'M AN X-MAN, I NEED Dr. RICHARDS' ALPHA HEAT SOURCE MODULE...
SQUAWRRRK!
...AN I REALLY HATE TO DO THIS TO YOU, BUT I CAN'T HANG AROUND WAITING FOR HIS PERMISSION. SORRY!
WHEN I PHASE THROUGH ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS, I SHORT-CIRCUIT THEM. IF I'M LUCKY, SHORTING THE RECEPTIONIST'S COMPUTER BRAIN LIKE THAT'LL GIVE ME THE TIME I NEED.
THE LAB IS ON THE THE THIRD LEVEL. BUT I'VE GOTTA BE REAL CAREFUL HOW I GO.
THE LAST THING I CAN AFFORD IS TO UNINTENTIONALLY CRASH SOME ULTRA-IMPORTANT DEVICE OR EXPERIMENT.

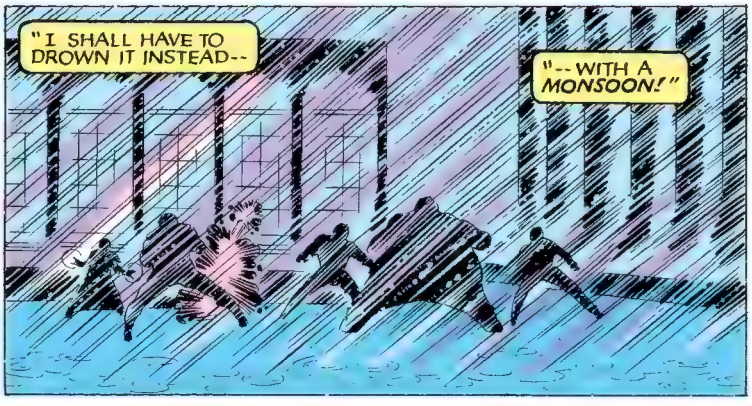

OH MY GOODNESS!
PHYSICAL INTERFACE WITH INTRUDER RESULTED IN TEMPORARY DYSFUNCTION-- INCLUDING LOSS OF IMMEDIATE SHORT-TERM MEMORY-- SYSTEMS RECIRCUITING, RETURNING TO NOMINAL OPERATION.
INTRUDER AT LARGE WITHIN FACILITY. IDENTITY UNKNOWN, ABILITIES PREDOMINANTLY UNKNOWN, INTENT UNKNOWN-- PRESUMED HOSTILE.
INITIATING STAGE ONE SECURITY ALERT!

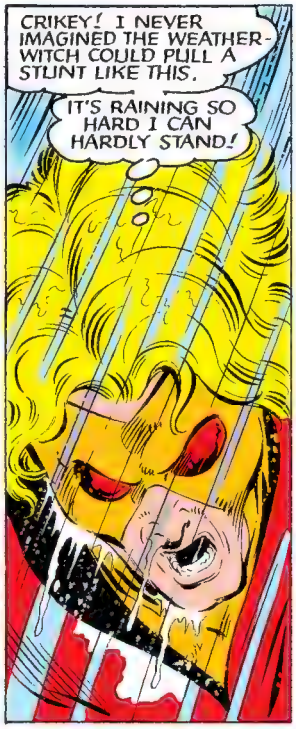

ON THE PLAZA AT LINCOLN CENTER...
... DESTINY DOES HER BEST TO ANTICIPATE THE X-MEN'S MOVES.


UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S ONE THING TO WARN A TEAM-MATE THAT NIGHTCRAWLER IS ABOUT TO TELEPORT AWAY FROM HIS PUNCH...
... AND SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN FOR HIM TO REACT FAST AND EFFECTIVELY ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
BAMF
KRAK!

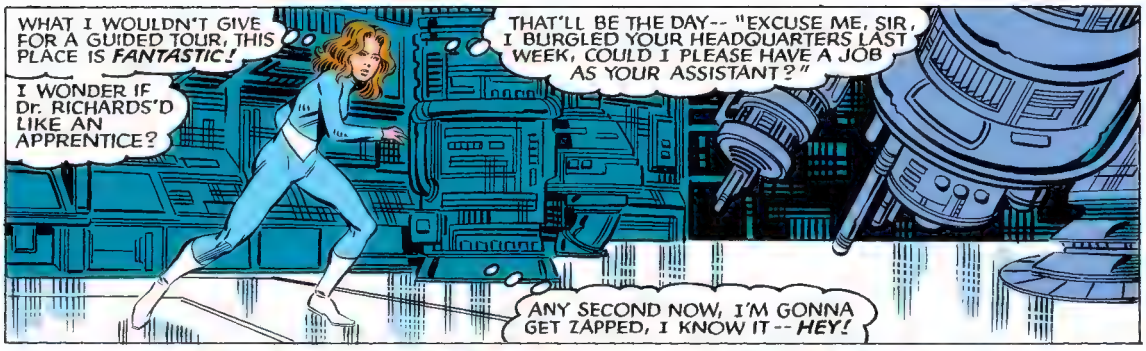

YOU GOT A MIDGET BRAIN TA GO WITH THAT PINT-SIZE BODY, RUNT?
EVEN THE HULK CAN'T FLATTEN ME. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?
WHUNFF!
HOW 'BOUT I FALL ON YOU, SHORTY, WE'LL SEE HOW GOOD THOSE FANCY BONES O' YOURS REALLY ARE?

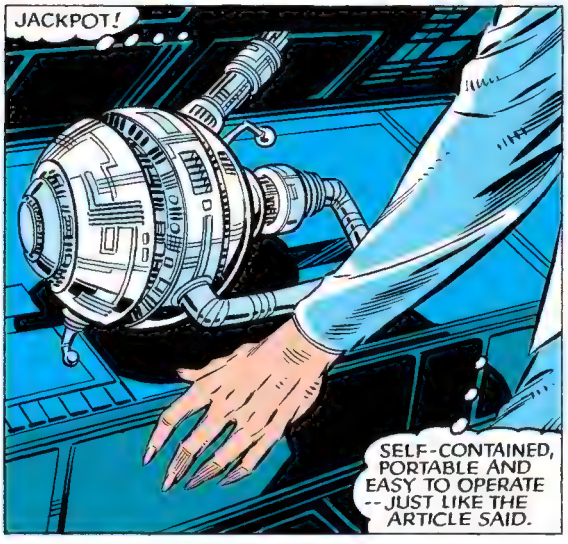

PYRO IS RESORTING TO A DIRECT ASSAULT-- HE IS TRYING TO BURN ME OUT OF THE SKY WITH A BEAM OF FIRE.
I CANNOT SHATTER IT WITH MY WINDS, AS I WOULD WITH A FLAME BEAST.

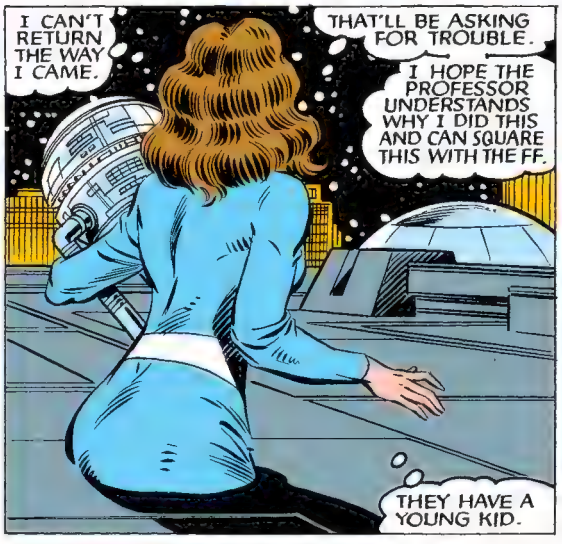

"I SHALL HAVE TO DROWN IT INSTEAD--
"--WITH A MONSOON!"

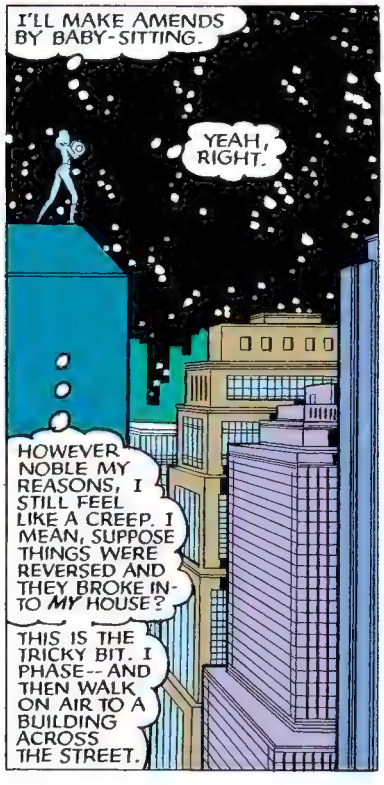

CRIKEY! I NEVER IMAGINED THE WEATHER-WITCH COULD PULL A STUNT LIKE THIS.
IT'S RAINING SO HARD I CAN HARDLY STAND!

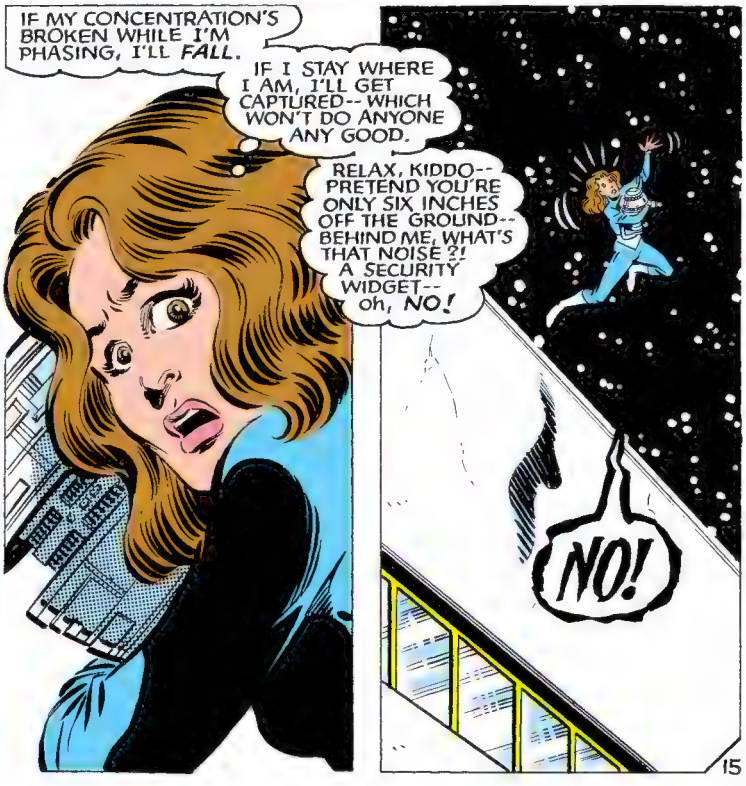
SHE'S SETTING OFF LIGHTNING TO DAZZLE US-- AN' THUNDER RIGHT ABOUT OUR HEADS, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO CONCENTRATE.
I'M NOT SURE I CAN EVEN MAINTAIN MY FLAME, MUCH LESS DO ANYTHING WITH IT.


WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR A GUIDED TOUR, THIS PLACE IS *FANTASTIC!*
I WONDER IF Dr. RICHARDS'D LIKE AN APPRENTICE?
THAT'LL BE THE DAY-- "EXCUSE ME, SIR, I BURGLED YOUR HEADQUARTERS LAST WEEK, COULD I PLEASE HAVE A JOB AS YOUR ASSISTANT?"
ANY SECOND NOW, I'M GONNA GET ZAPPED, I KNOW IT-- *HEY!*


JACKPOT!
SELF-CONTAINED, PORTABLE AND EASY TO OPERATE -- JUST LIKE THE ARTICLE SAID.


I CAN'T RETURN THE WAY I CAME.
THAT'LL BE ASKING FOR TROUBLE.
I HOPE THE PROFESSOR UNDERSTANDS WHY I DID THIS AND CAN SQUARE THIS WITH THE FF.
THEY HAVE A YOUNG KID.


I'LL MAKE AMENDS BY BABY-SITTING.
YEAH, RIGHT.
HOWEVER NOBLE MY REASONS, I STILL FEEL LIKE A CREEP. I MEAN, SUPPOSE THINGS WERE REVERSED AND THEY BROKE IN-TO *MY* HOUSE?
THIS IS THE TRICKY BIT. I PHASE-- AND THEN WALK ON AIR TO A BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET.

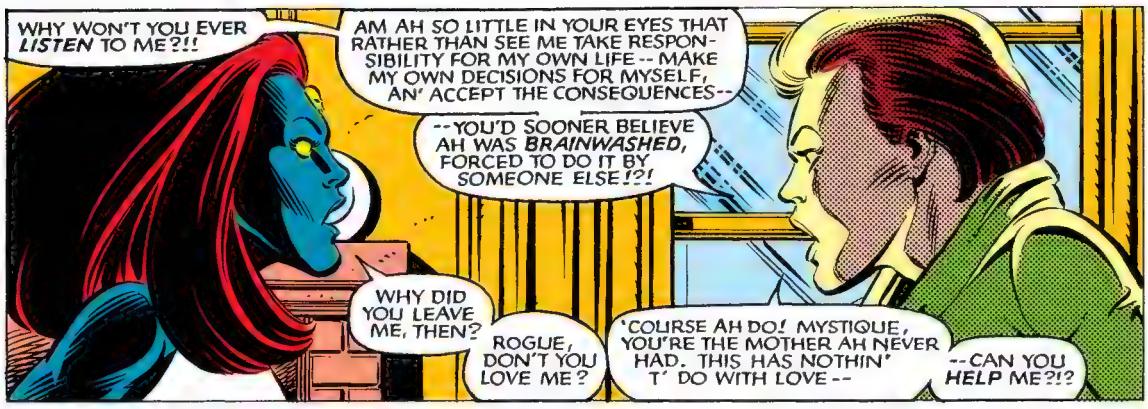

IF MY CONCENTRATION'S BROKEN WHILE I'M PHASING, I'LL *FALL.*
IF I STAY WHERE I AM, I'LL GET CAPTURED-- WHICH WON'T DO ANYONE ANY GOOD.
RELAX, KIDDO-- PRETEND YOU'RE ONLY SIX INCHES OFF THE GROUND-- BEHIND ME, WHAT'S THAT NOISE?! A SECURITY WIDGET-- oh, *NO!*
NO!

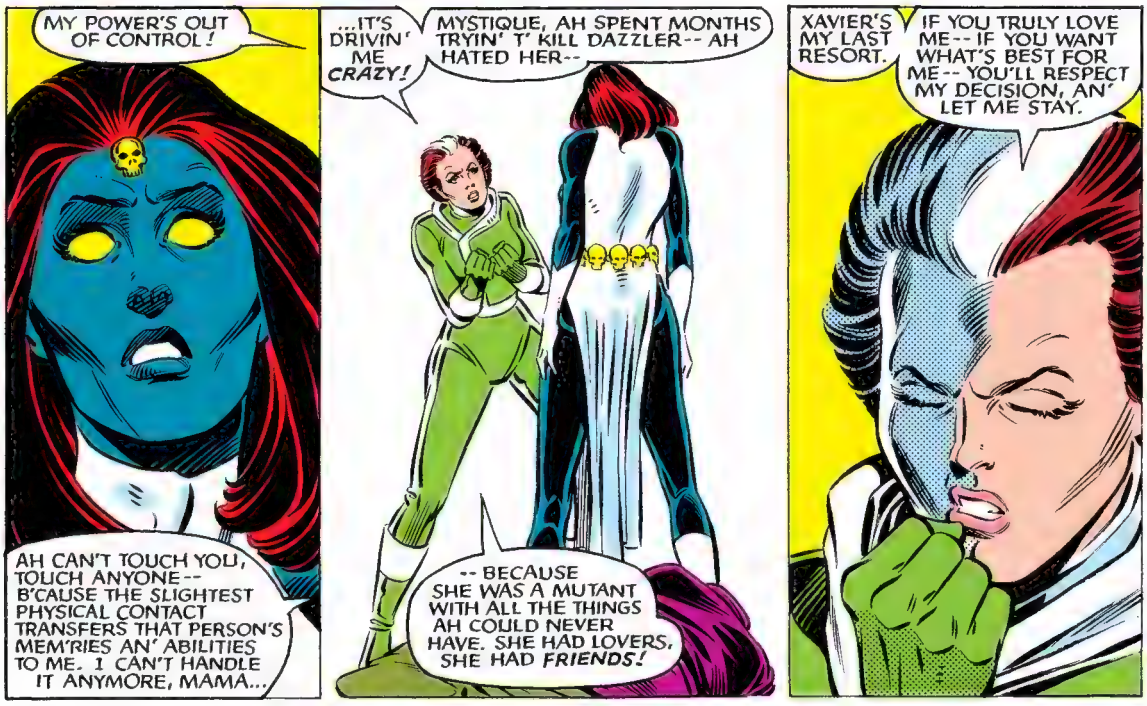
MEANWHILE...
RAIN OR SHINE, IT'S IMMATERIAL TO ME.
EVEN IF MY GROUND-SLIDE MISSES YOU, NIGHTCRAWLER, IT'LL STILL BURY YOUR PARTNER AND YOUR GIRL.
BAMF
RIGHT IDEA, AVALANCHE--
URK!
--WRONG TARGET.
THE TIDAL EFFECT-- ONCE IT'S TRIGGERED, I CAN'T REVERSE IT!
BLOB, LOOK OUT!
HUH?!!
HEY, TUBBO--
--WHAT USE IS BEIN' AN IMMOVABLE OBJECT...
...IF THE GROUND TURNS TO QUICKSAND BENEATH YOUR FEET?
WANT TO CALL IT QUITS?
EITHER WAY IS FINE WITH ME.

HEY, I GIVE UP.
YOU'RE TAKING DEFEAT AWFULLY WELL, BLOB.
I'M A PRACTICAL MAN--YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME, IT ALL BALANCES OUT INNA END.
B'SIDES, FUZZY, WHOEVER SAID THIS WAS A DEFEAT? WE SURRENDERED, WE DIDN'T LOSE.
THIS WAS TOO EASY--ALMOST AS IF THE BROTHERHOOD DID NOT CARE ABOUT THE OUTCOME.
PETEY! STORM, PART O' KITTY'S MAYDAY WAS THAT HE'D BEEN HURT! AN' WHERE'S THE KID HERSELF?!!
DUMMY, THE GIRL DIDN'T MATTER, AN' HER RUSSKIE SMOOCH WAS ICIN' ONNA CAKE!
AIN'T YOU CLOWNS TWIGGED THINGS YET?!
WE WERE NEVER AFTER YOUR HIDES. THIS WAS A DIVERSION!
GO AHEAD, SEND US BACK TO PRISON. WE BEEN THERE BEFORE, WE'LL BUST OUT. BUT YOU POOR SLOBS'RE GONNA HAVETA FIND YOURSELVES A NEW TEACHER.
"OR A WAY TO RAISE THE OLD ONE FROM THE DEAD!"

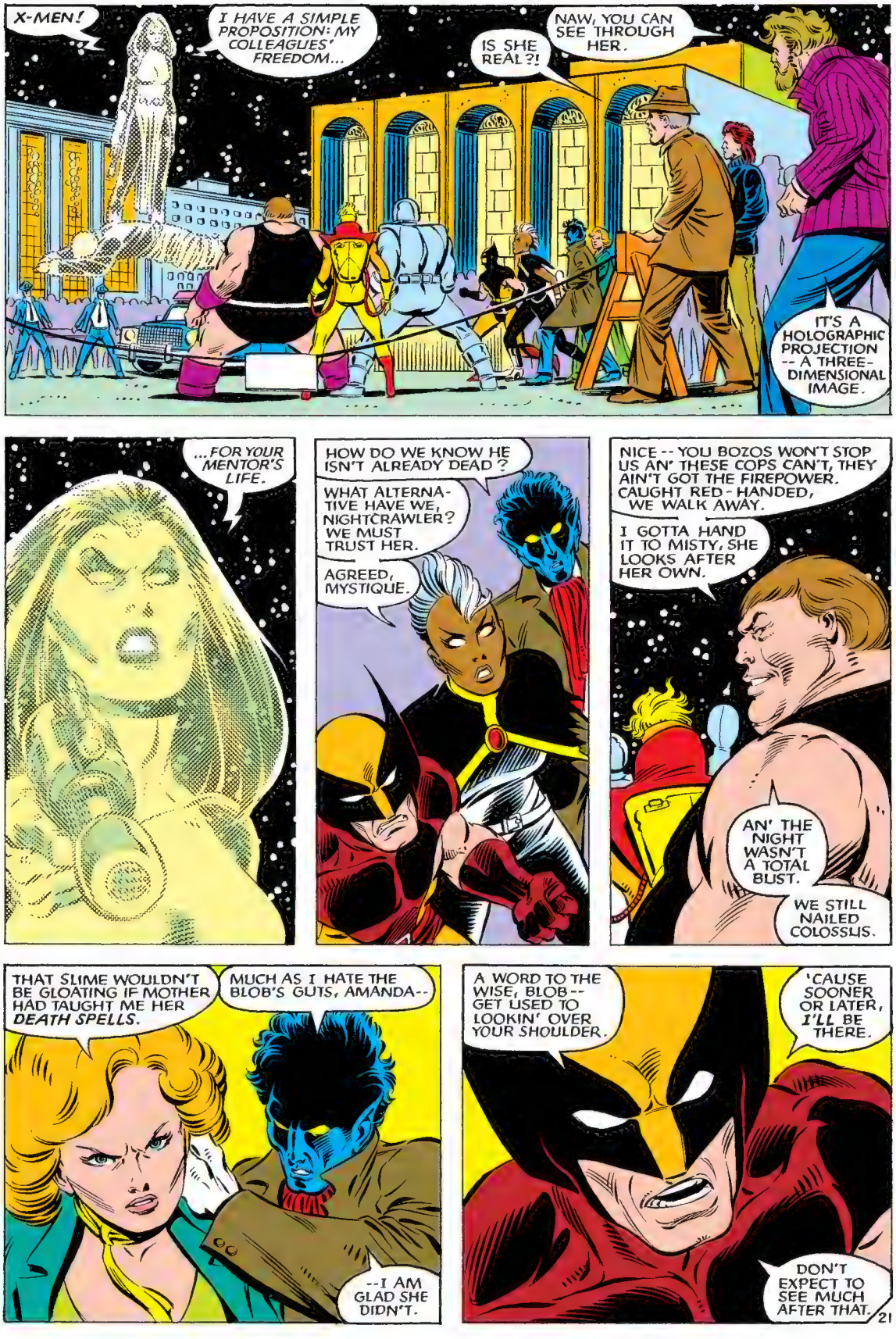
BLAST! THE INTERFERENCE IS STRONGER THAN EVER!
IT'S KEPT ME FROM CONTACTING THE X-MEN SINCE STORM AND WOLVERINE ENGAGED THE BROTHERHOOD.
INITIALLY, I ASSUMED IT WAS PSYCHIC RESIDUE FROM THE SCANNING WAVE...
... BUT I NO LONGER BELIEVE THAT'S THE CASE. I'VE ENCOUNTERED THIS JAMMING PATTERN BEFORE-- BUT WHERE, WHEN?!
YOU LOOK PRETTY RAGGED, PROFESSOR.
AH BROUGHT YOU SOME HERB TEA.
THAT'S VERY KIND, ROGUE, THANK YOU.
MAH PLEASURE, SIR. ANYTHING ELSE AH CAN DO?
NOT AT THE MOMENT.
WAIT--NO WONDER THE PATTERN FEELS FAMILIAR. IT WAS MONTHS AGO, IN WASHINGTON! MYSTIQUE USED IT TO INHIBIT MY PSI-PROBES...
... SO SHE COULD GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO ME TO...
SHZAK!
ARRRGH!
INCREDIBLE. AT THE VERY LAST INSTANT, HE SENSED MY ATTACK. DESPITE MY PSIONIC SCRAMBLER, HE WAS ABLE TO MAKE ME SHIFT MY AIM...
... SO THAT A SHOT MEANT TO KILL ONLY WOUNDED HIM.
HE'S UNCONSCIOUS NOW, THOUGH. QUITE HELPLESS.

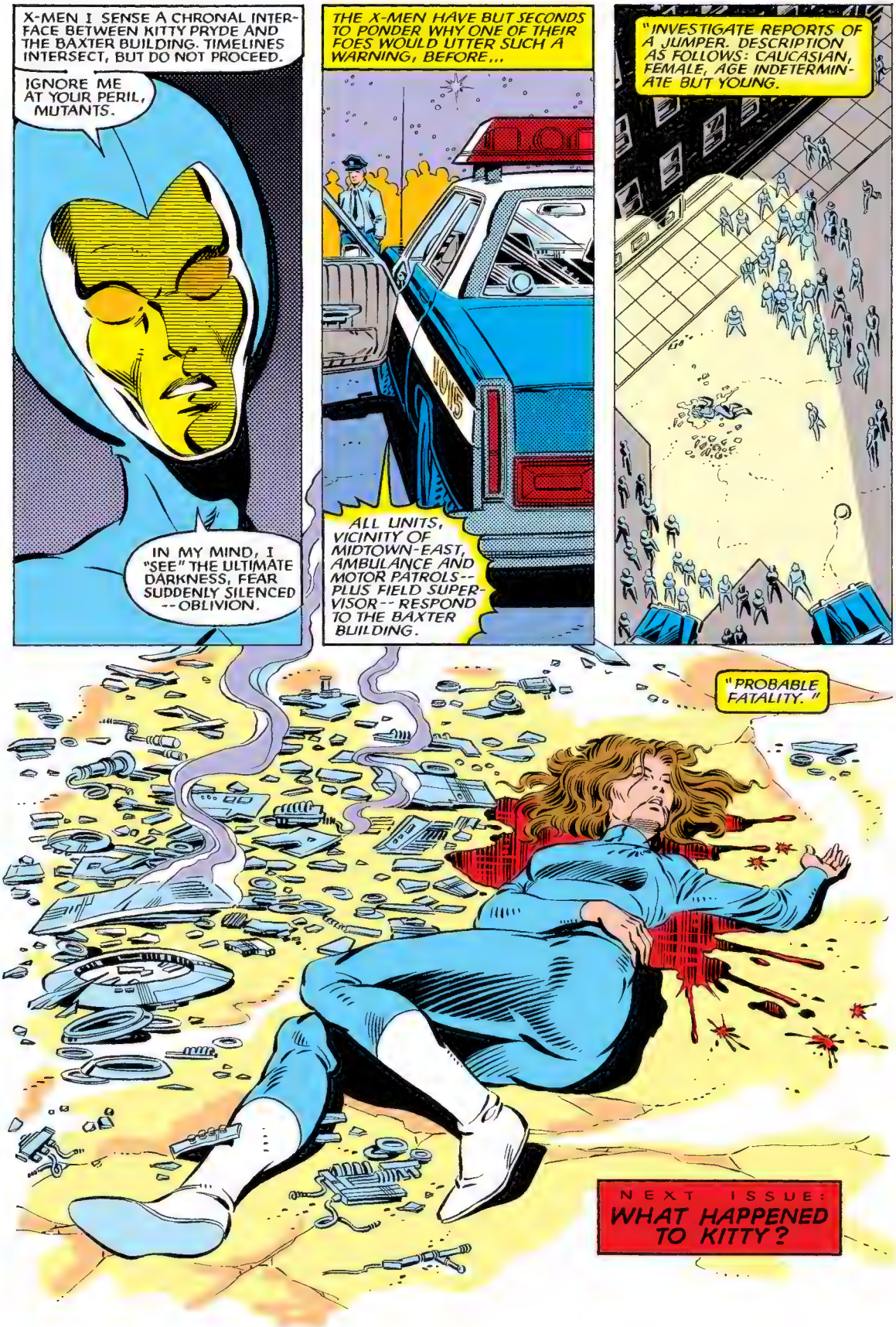
PR'FESSOR, AH HEARD A SHOT-- AN' A SCREAM!
CHRISTMAS!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, ROGUE.
IT'S ONLY I, COME TO TAKE YOU HOME.
MYSTIQUE!
IS... IS HE DEAD, HAVE YOU KILLED HIM?
NOT YET.
GO PACK YOUR THINGS, WHILE I FINISH MY BUSINESS HERE.
AH DON'T GET IT, WHY'RE YOU DOIN' THIS?!
FOR YOU, OF COURSE.
DID YOU THINK I WAS GOING TO LET XAVIER STEAL MY DAUGHTER AND GET AWAY WITH IT?
HE DIDN'T KIDNAP ME-- WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA. AH THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD, MYSTIQUE, AH CAME OF MY OWN FREE WILL!
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW, ROGUE? WITH HIS ACCURSED MENTAL POWERS, XAVIER COULD MAKE YOU BELIEVE OR DO ANYTHING.
AH WON'T LET YOU KILL HIM. IT'S WRONG--YOU'RE WRONG!
STAND ASIDE, GIRL.


WHY WON'T YOU EVER LISTEN TO ME?!!
AM AH SO LITTLE IN YOUR EYES THAT RATHER THAN SEE ME TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN LIFE -- MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS FOR MYSELF, AN' ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES--
--YOU'D SOONER BELIEVE AH WAS BRAINWASHED, FORCED TO DO IT BY SOMEONE ELSE!?!
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME, THEN?
ROGUE, DON'T YOU LOVE ME?
'COURSE AH DO! MYSTIQUE, YOU'RE THE MOTHER AH NEVER HAD. THIS HAS NOTHIN' T' DO WITH LOVE --
--CAN YOU HELP ME?!?


MY POWER'S OUT OF CONTROL!
AH CAN'T TOUCH YOU, TOUCH ANYONE -- B'CAUSE THE SLIGHTEST PHYSICAL CONTACT TRANSFERS THAT PERSON'S MEM'RIES AN' ABILITIES TO ME. I CAN'T HANDLE IT ANYMORE, MAMA...
...IT'S DRIVIN' ME CRAZY!
MYSTIQUE, AH SPENT MONTHS TRYIN' T' KILL DAZZLER -- AH HATED HER--
-- BECAUSE SHE WAS A MUTANT WITH ALL THE THINGS AH COULD NEVER HAVE. SHE HAD LOVERS, SHE HAD FRIENDS!
XAVIER'S MY LAST RESORT.
IF YOU TRULY LOVE ME -- IF YOU WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR ME -- YOU'LL RESPECT MY DECISION, AN' LET ME STAY.

AND WHEN IT'S OVER, WHEN YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN X-MEN AND BROTHERHOOD -- HIM AND... ME -- WHAT THEN?
AT LEAST I'LL HAVE A CHOICE.
MORE'N AH GOT NOW.
WHEN AH WAS A KID -- 'FORE AH DEVELOPED MAH POWER -- AH REMEMEMBER YOU HOLDIN' ME, PROTECTIN' ME FROM THE BADNESS AN' NIGHTMARES.
YOU CAN'T DO THAT ANYMORE, YOU DON'T DARE.
AH WANT TO BE NORMAL, MYSTIQUE. IF NOTHIN' ELSE, AH WANT A CHANCE!
IS THAT SO MUCH TO ASK?


X-MEN!
I HAVE A SIMPLE PROPOSITION: MY COLLEAGUES' FREEDOM...
IS SHE REAL?!
NAW, YOU CAN SEE THROUGH HER.
IT'S A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION -- A THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE.
...FOR YOUR MENTOR'S LIFE.
HOW DO WE KNOW HE ISN'T ALREADY DEAD?
WHAT ALTERNATIVE HAVE WE, NIGHTCRAWLER? WE MUST TRUST HER.
AGREED, MYSTIQUE.
NICE -- YOU BOZOS WON'T STOP US AN' THESE COPS CAN'T, THEY AIN'T GOT THE FIREPOWER. CAUGHT RED-HANDED, WE WALK AWAY.
I GOTTA HAND IT TO MISTY, SHE LOOKS AFTER HER OWN.
AN' THE NIGHT WASN'T A TOTAL BUST.
WE STILL NAILED COLOSSUS.
THAT SLIME WOULDN'T BE GLOATING IF MOTHER HAD TAUGHT ME HER DEATH SPELLS.
MUCH AS I HATE THE BLOB'S GUTS, AMANDA--
--I AM GLAD SHE DIDN'T.
A WORD TO THE WISE, BLOB -- GET USED TO LOOKIN' OVER YOUR SHOULDER.
'CAUSE SOONER OR LATER, I'LL BE THERE.
DON'T EXPECT TO SEE MUCH AFTER THAT.


X-MEN I SENSE A CHRONAL INTERFACE BETWEEN KITTY PRYDE AND THE BAXTER BUILDING. TIMELINES INTERSECT, BUT DO NOT PROCEED.
IGNORE ME AT YOUR PERIL, MUTANTS.
IN MY MIND, I "SEE" THE ULTIMATE DARKNESS, FEAR SUDDENLY SILENCED --OBLIVION.
THE X-MEN HAVE BUT SECONDS TO PONDER WHY ONE OF THEIR FOES WOULD UTTER SUCH A WARNING, BEFORE...
ALL UNITS, VICINITY OF MIDTOWN-EAST, AMBULANCE AND MOTOR PATROLS-- PLUS FIELD SUPERVISOR-- RESPOND TO THE BAXTER BUILDING.
"INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF A JUMPER. DESCRIPTION AS FOLLOWS: CAUCASIAN, FEMALE, AGE INDETERMINATE BUT YOUNG.
"PROBABLE FATALITY."
NEXT ISSUE:
WHAT HAPPENED TO KITTY?

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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02461
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MORLOCK LAW
CEREMONY OF MARRIAGE
JR.JR.+PG

THERE IS A CITY BENEATH THE CITY-- A LABYRINTHINE NETWORK OF TUNNELS AND PASSAGES THAT REACH AS DEEP...
...AS MANHATTAN'S FABLED SKYSCRAPERS DO HIGH.
A THOUSAND FEET BELOW THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE SURFACE IS WHERE THE MORLOCKS RULE--
--A GROUP OF MUTANTS, SELF-PROCLAIMED OUTCASTS FROM A WORLD THEY BELIEVE HAS NO PLACE FOR THEM.
THEY'VE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE A NEW ARRIVAL AMONGST THEM...
...AND A WEDDING--
--THE DUAL CEREMONIES ORCHESTRATED AND OVERSEEN BY CALLISTO...
...WHO USED TO BE THEIR LEADER UNTIL THAT TITLE WAS TAKEN FROM HER IN SINGLE COMBAT BY THE X-MAN, STORM.
SHE'S READY, CAL.
THEN BY ALL MEANS, JO...
"...PRESENT OUR YOUNG BRIDE TO HER NEW FAMILY."

STAN LEE PRESENTS
WHAT HAPPENED TO KITTY?
STARRING THE UNCANNY X-MEN!
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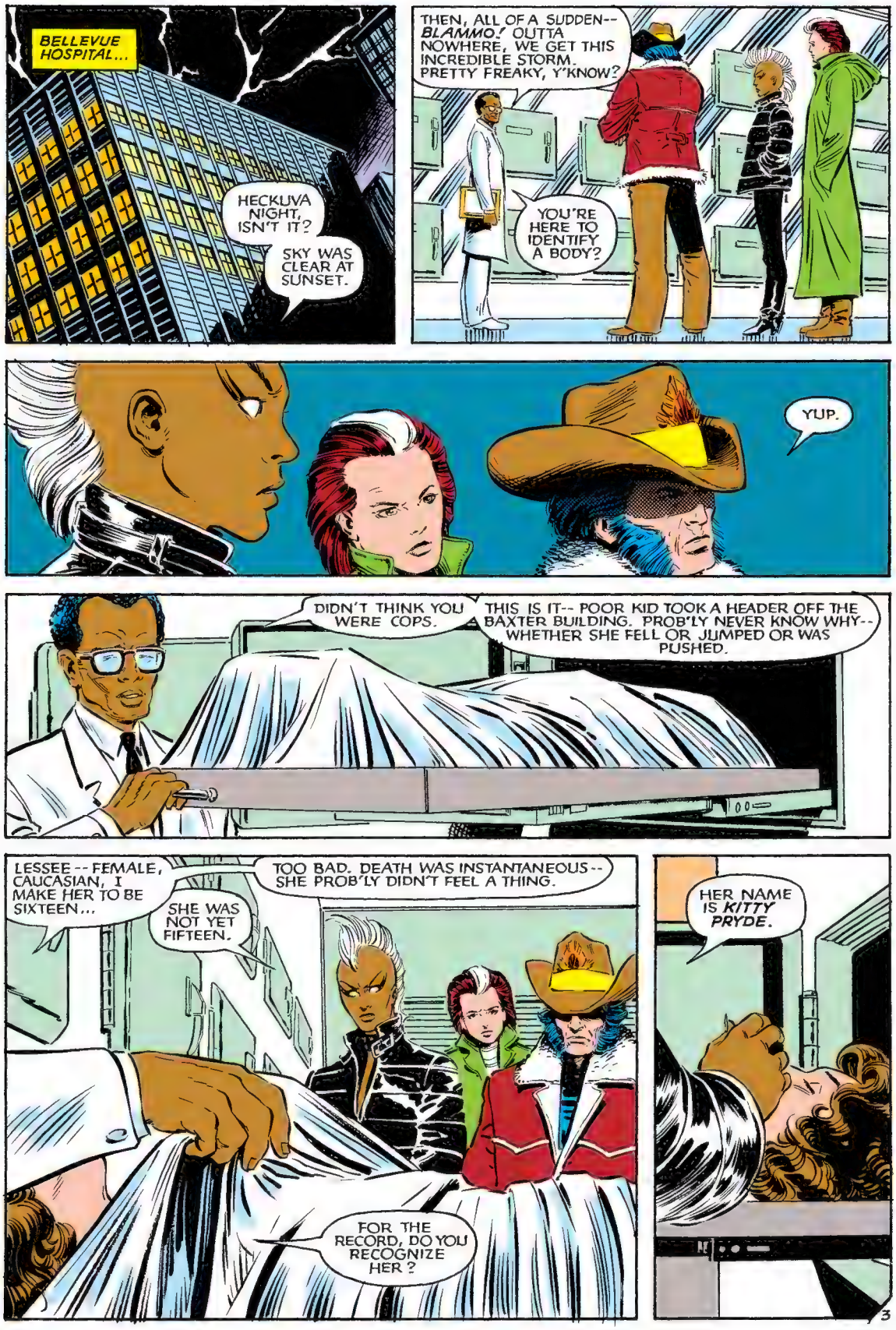
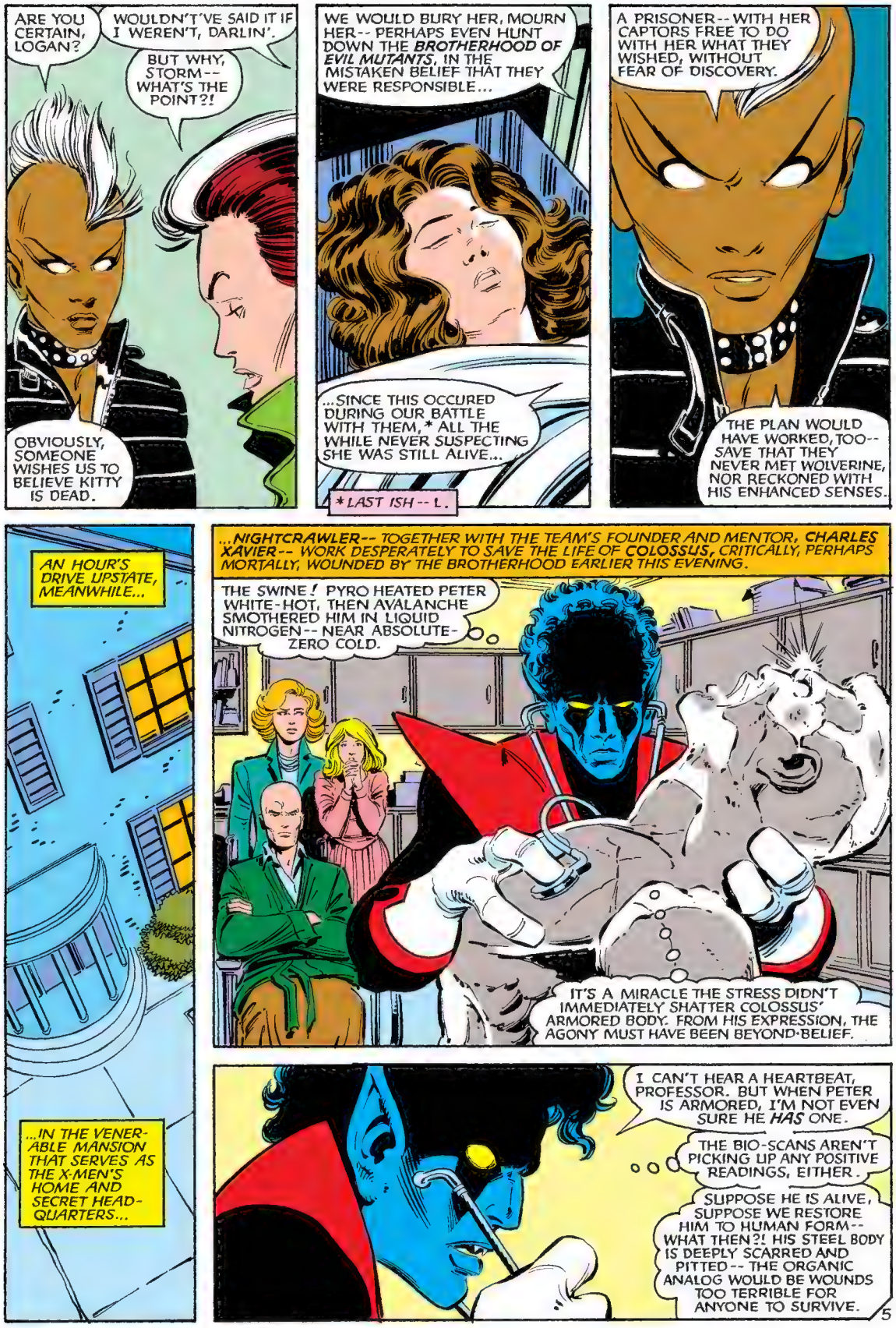
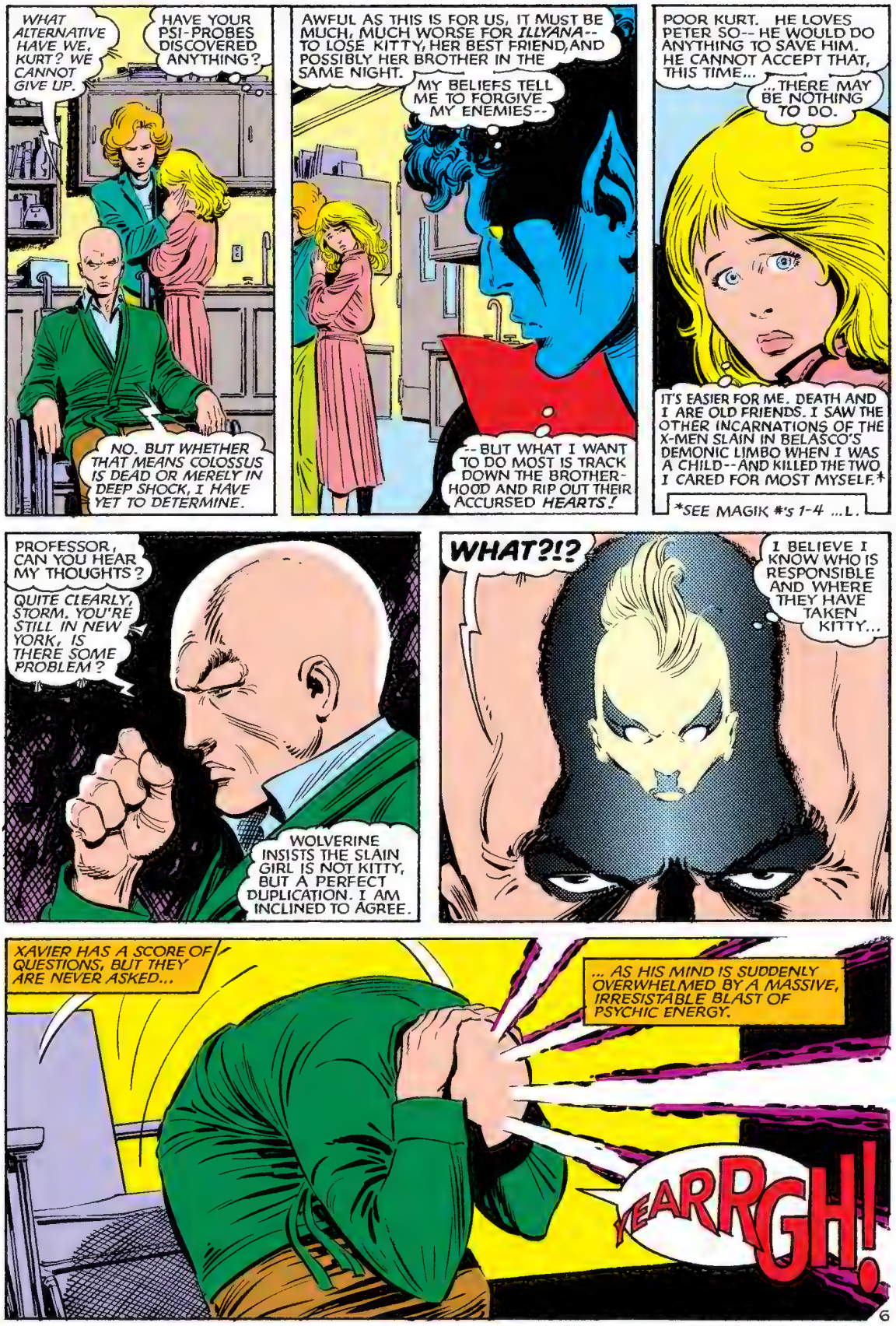
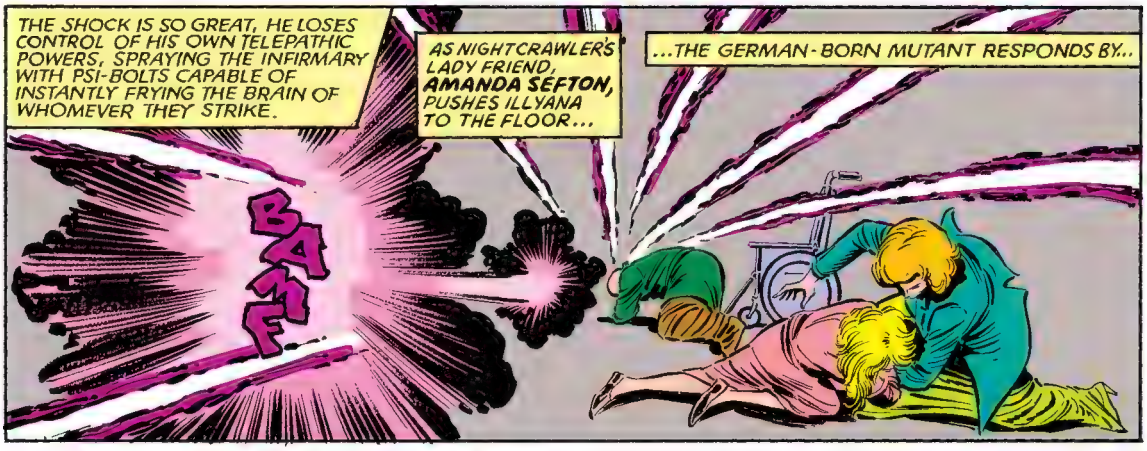

BELLEVUE HOSPITAL...
HECKUVA NIGHT, ISN'T IT?
SKY WAS CLEAR AT SUNSET.
THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN-- BLAMMO! OUTTA NOWHERE, WE GET THIS INCREDIBLE STORM. PRETTY FREAKY, Y'KNOW?
YOU'RE HERE TO IDENTIFY A BODY?
YUP.
DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE COPS.
THIS IS IT-- POOR KID TOOK A HEADER OFF THE BAXTER BUILDING. PROB'LY NEVER KNOW WHY-- WHETHER SHE FELL OR JUMPED OR WAS PUSHED.
LESSEE -- FEMALE, CAUCASIAN, I MAKE HER TO BE SIXTEEN...
SHE WAS NOT YET FIFTEEN.
TOO BAD. DEATH WAS INSTANTANEOUS -- SHE PROB'LY DIDN'T FEEL A THING.
FOR THE RECORD, DO YOU RECOGNIZE HER?
HER NAME IS KITTY PRYDE.

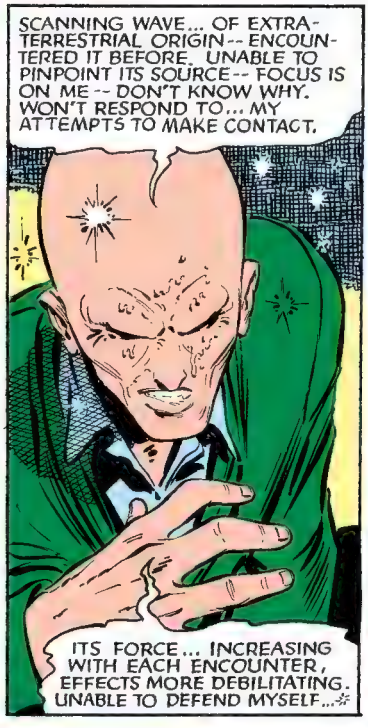
THE BAXTER BUILDING IS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR-- WHAT WAS SHE DOING THERE?
HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?!
STORM'S FACE IS A STOIC MASQUE, THE DEPTH OF HER GRIEF BETRAYED ONLY BY A TREMBLING HAND...
...AND A BOLT OF LIGHTNING THAT TURNS THE NIGHT SKY TO DAY, FOLLOWED BY A BOOM OF THUNDER THAT SHATTERS WINDOWS...
...AND SHAKES BUILDINGS TO THEIR VERY CORES.
HOLY COW! WHATEVER'S GOIN' ON UPSTAIRS MUST BE PRETTY IMPRESSIVE!
SO WHY DON'T'CHA TREAT YOURSELF TO A LOOK?
SORRY. CAN'T LEAVE VISITORS ALONE IN THE MORGUE. AGAINST THE RULES.
THIS ONCE, BEND 'EM A LITTLE.
H-HEY, I'M A REASONABLE KIND'A GUY-- AN' YOU LOOK LIKE RESPECTABLE, TRUSTWORTHY PEOPLE-- NO PROBLEM.
FIVE MINUTES OKAY?
THAT'LL DO FINE.
GREAT!
IF I STALL A LITTLE, MAYBE THEY'LL BE GONE WHEN I GET BACK. I SURE HOPE SO.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, WHY DID YOU CHASE THE MAN AWAY?
SOME THINGS'RE BETTER SAID IN PRIVATE.
THIS AIN'T KITTY.
YOU'RE CRAZY, WOLVERINE!
MAYBE-- BUT I'M ALSO RIGHT.
THIS KID MAY HAVE KITTY'S FACE AN' OUTFIT-- SHE MAY BE A PERFECT MATCH, RIGHT DOWN TO FINGER AN' RETINAL PRINTS-- BUT IT'S NOT HER.
SCENT'S WRONG.


ARE YOU CERTAIN, LOGAN?
WOULDN'T'VE SAID IT IF I WEREN'T, DARLIN'.
BUT WHY, STORM-- WHAT'S THE POINT?!
OBVIOUSLY, SOMEONE WISHES US TO BELIEVE KITTY IS DEAD.
WE WOULD BURY HER, MOURN HER-- PERHAPS EVEN HUNT DOWN THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS, IN THE MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE...
...SINCE THIS OCCURED DURING OUR BATTLE WITH THEM,* ALL THE WHILE NEVER SUSPECTING SHE WAS STILL ALIVE...
*LAST ISH -- L.
A PRISONER-- WITH HER CAPTORS FREE TO DO WITH HER WHAT THEY WISHED, WITHOUT FEAR OF DISCOVERY.
THE PLAN WOULD HAVE WORKED, TOO-- SAVE THAT THEY NEVER MET WOLVERINE, NOR RECKONED WITH HIS ENHANCED SENSES.
AN HOUR'S DRIVE UPSTATE, MEANWHILE...
...IN THE VENERABLE MANSION THAT SERVES AS THE X-MEN'S HOME AND SECRET HEADQUARTERS...
...NIGHTCRAWLER-- TOGETHER WITH THE TEAM'S FOUNDER AND MENTOR, CHARLES XAVIER-- WORK DESPERATELY TO SAVE THE LIFE OF COLOSSUS, CRITICALLY, PERHAPS MORTALLY, WOUNDED BY THE BROTHERHOOD EARLIER THIS EVENING.
THE SWINE! PYRO HEATED PETER WHITE-HOT, THEN AVALANCHE SMOTHERED HIM IN LIQUID NITROGEN-- NEAR ABSOLUTE-ZERO COLD.
IT'S A MIRACLE THE STRESS DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY SHATTER COLOSSUS' ARMORED BODY. FROM HIS EXPRESSION, THE AGONY MUST HAVE BEEN BEYOND-BELIEF.
I CAN'T HEAR A HEARTBEAT, PROFESSOR. BUT WHEN PETER IS ARMORED, I'M NOT EVEN SURE HE HAS ONE.
THE BIO-SCANS AREN'T PICKING UP ANY POSITIVE READINGS, EITHER.
SUPPOSE HE IS ALIVE, SUPPOSE WE RESTORE HIM TO HUMAN FORM-- WHAT THEN?! HIS STEEL BODY IS DEEPLY SCARRED AND PITTED-- THE ORGANIC ANALOG WOULD BE WOUNDS TOO TERRIBLE FOR ANYONE TO SURVIVE.

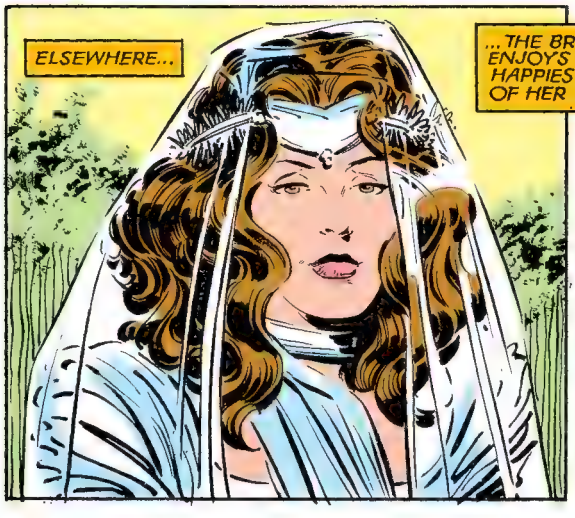

WHAT ALTERNATIVE HAVE WE, KURT? WE CANNOT GIVE UP.
HAVE YOUR PSI-PROBES DISCOVERED ANYTHING?
NO. BUT WHETHER THAT MEANS COLOSSUS IS DEAD OR MERELY IN DEEP SHOCK, I HAVE YET TO DETERMINE.
AWFUL AS THIS IS FOR US, IT MUST BE MUCH, MUCH WORSE FOR ILLYANA-- TO LOSE KITTY, HER BEST FRIEND, AND POSSIBLY HER BROTHER IN THE SAME NIGHT.
MY BELIEFS TELL ME TO FORGIVE MY ENEMIES--
--BUT WHAT I WANT TO DO MOST IS TRACK DOWN THE BROTHERHOOD AND RIP OUT THEIR ACCURSED HEARTS!
POOR KURT. HE LOVES PETER SO-- HE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SAVE HIM. HE CANNOT ACCEPT THAT, THIS TIME...
...THERE MAY BE NOTHING TO DO.
IT'S EASIER FOR ME. DEATH AND I ARE OLD FRIENDS. I SAW THE OTHER INCARNATIONS OF THE X-MEN SLAIN IN BELASCO'S DEMONIC LIMBO WHEN I WAS A CHILD--AND KILLED THE TWO I CARED FOR MOST MYSELF.†
*SEE MAGIK #'S 1-4 ...L.
PROFESSOR, CAN YOU HEAR MY THOUGHTS?
QUITE CLEARLY, STORM. YOU'RE STILL IN NEW YORK, IS THERE SOME PROBLEM?
WOLVERINE INSISTS THE SLAIN GIRL IS NOT KITTY, BUT A PERFECT DUPLICATION. I AM INCLINED TO AGREE.
WHAT?!?
I BELIEVE I KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE AND WHERE THEY HAVE TAKEN KITTY...
XAVIER HAS A SCORE OF QUESTIONS, BUT THEY ARE NEVER ASKED...
... AS HIS MIND IS SUDDENLY OVERWHELMED BY A MASSIVE, IRRESISTABLE BLAST OF PSYCHIC ENERGY.
YEARRGH!

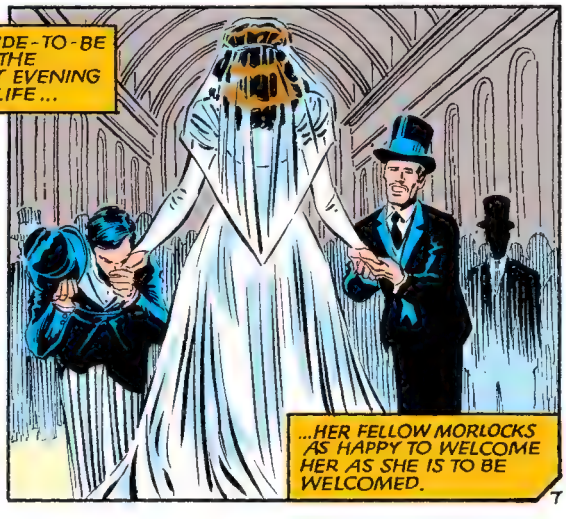

THE SHOCK IS SO GREAT, HE LOSES CONTROL OF HIS OWN TELEPATHIC POWERS, SPRAYING THE INFIRMARY WITH PSI-BOLTS CAPABLE OF INSTANTLY FRYING THE BRAIN OF WHOMEVER THEY STRIKE.
AS NIGHTCRAWLER'S LADY FRIEND, AMANDA SEFTON, PUSHES ILLYANA TO THE FLOOR...
...THE GERMAN-BORN MUTANT RESPONDS BY..
BAM!

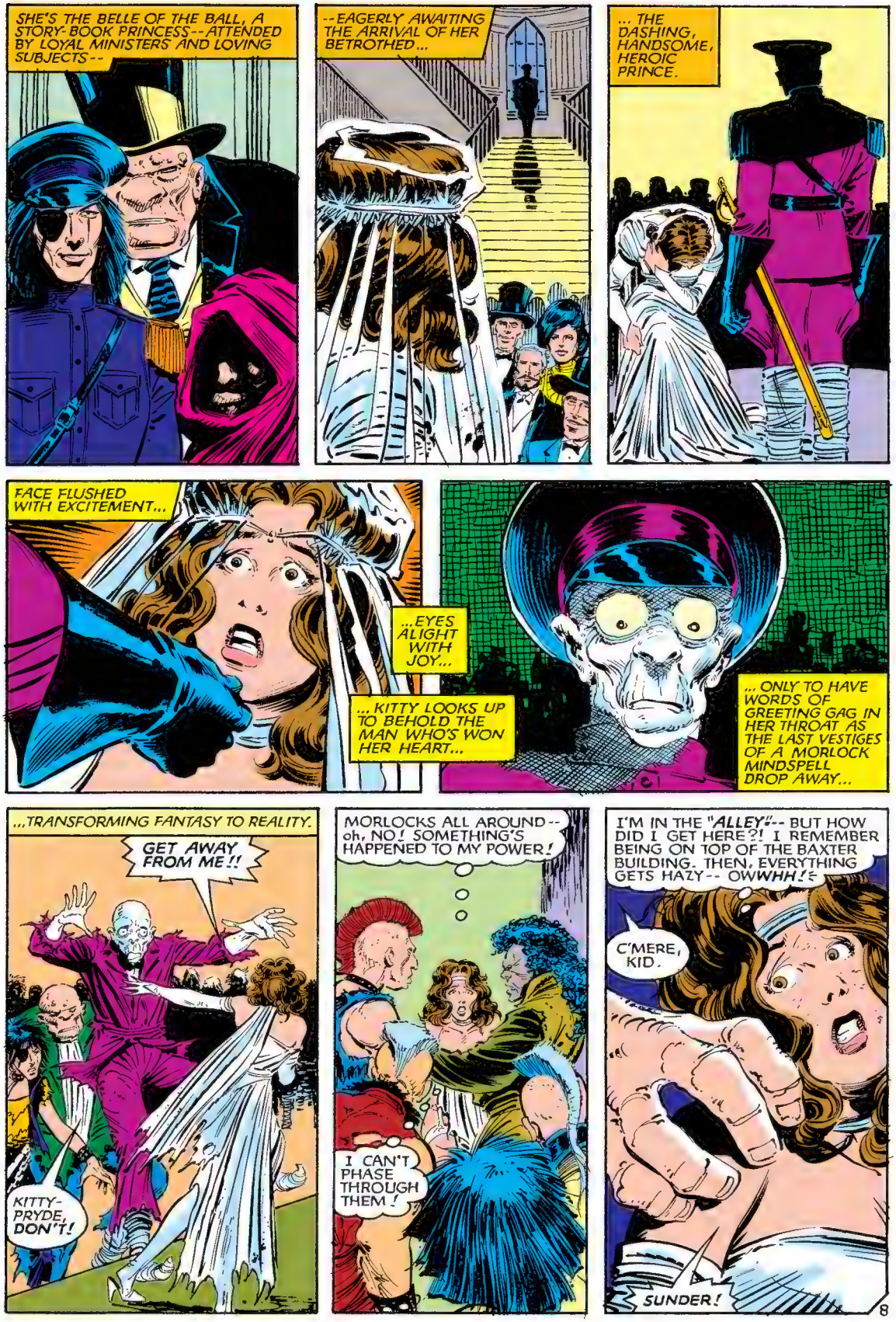
...TELEPORTING TO HIS TEACHERS' SIDE.
HERR PROFESSOR, GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF, BEFORE YOU KILL US ALL!
PERHAPS I SHOULD SEDATE HIM-- OR WILL THAT ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE?
AAAHHHH-- MY HEAD... NEVER IMAGINED SUCH PAIN...

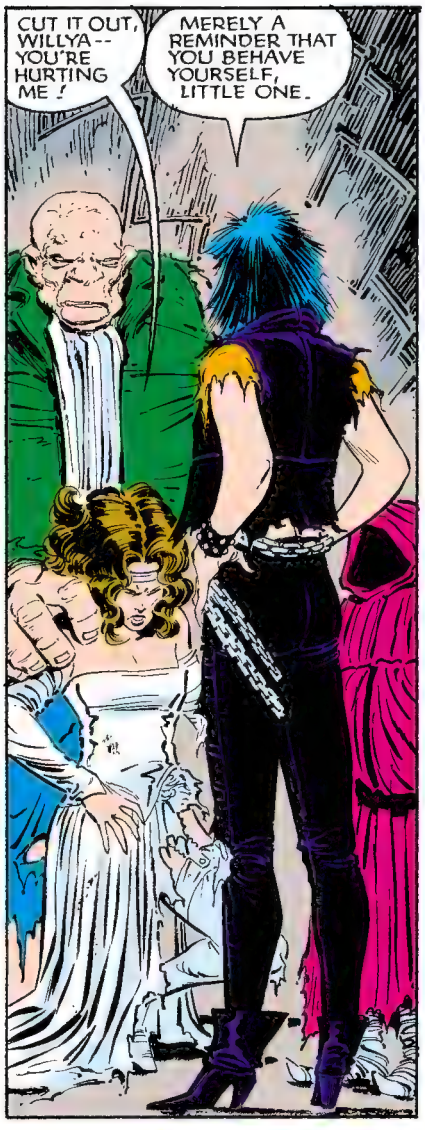

SCANNING WAVE... OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ORIGIN-- ENCOUNTERED IT BEFORE. UNABLE TO PINPOINT ITS SOURCE-- FOCUS IS ON ME-- DON'T KNOW WHY. WON'T RESPOND TO... MY ATTEMPTS TO MAKE CONTACT.
ITS FORCE... INCREASING WITH EACH ENCOUNTER, EFFECTS MORE DEBILITATING. UNABLE TO DEFEND MYSELF...

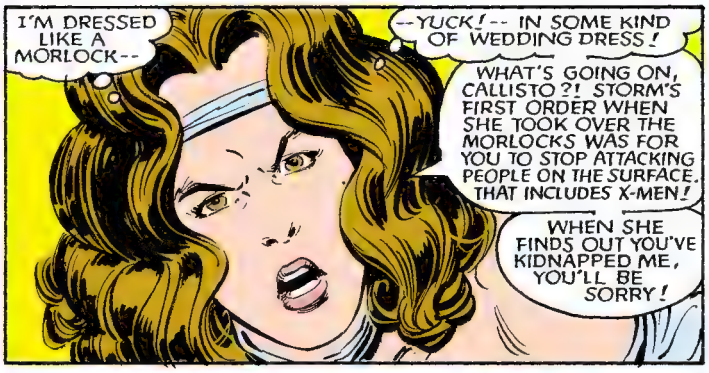
PROFESSOR? PROFESSOR?!!
AMANDA, HELP ME GET HIM INTO A LIFE SUPPORT CELL!
I'VE GOT TO WARN STORM, THROUGH OUR RADIO COMLINK-- BUT OF WHAT?! IS THIS ANOTHER ATTACK, BY SOME NEW FOE?!
WHAT IS HAPPENING, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?!!

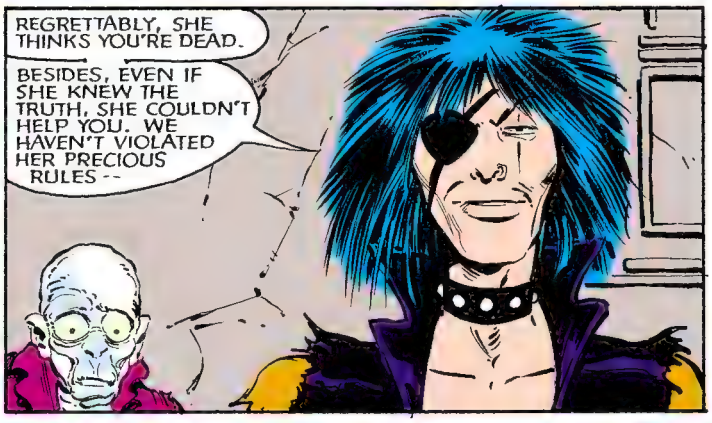

ELSEWHERE...
...THE BRIDE-TO-BE ENJOYS THE HAPPIEST EVENING OF HER LIFE...


...HER FELLOW MORLOCKS AS HAPPY TO WELCOME HER AS SHE IS TO BE WELCOMED.


SHE'S THE BELLE OF THE BALL, A STORY-BOOK PRINCESS--ATTENDED BY LOYAL MINISTERS AND LOVING SUBJECTS--
--EAGERLY AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF HER BETROTHED...
... THE DASHING, HANDSOME, HEROIC PRINCE.
FACE FLUSHED WITH EXCITEMENT...
...EYES ALIGHT WITH JOY...
...KITTY LOOKS UP TO BEHOLD THE MAN WHO'S WON HER HEART...
... ONLY TO HAVE WORDS OF GREETING GAG IN HER THROAT AS THE LAST VESTIGES OF A MORLOCK MINDSPELL DROP AWAY...
...TRANSFORMING FANTASY TO REALITY.
GET AWAY FROM ME!!
KITTY-PRYDE, DON'T!
MORLOCKS ALL AROUND-- oh, NO! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO MY POWER!
I CAN'T PHASE THROUGH THEM!
I'M IN THE "ALLEY"-- BUT HOW DID I GET HERE?! I REMEMBER BEING ON TOP OF THE BAXTER BUILDING. THEN, EVERYTHING GETS HAZY-- OWWHH!
C'MERE, KID.
SUNDER!


CUT IT OUT, WILLYA-- YOU'RE HURTING ME!
MERELY A REMINDER THAT YOU BEHAVE YOURSELF, LITTLE ONE.

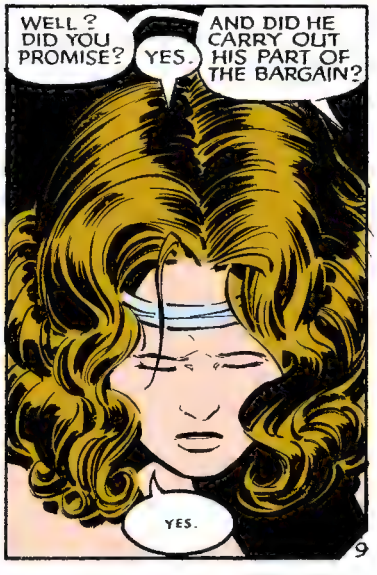

I'M DRESSED LIKE A MORLOCK--
--YUCK!-- IN SOME KIND OF WEDDING DRESS!
WHAT'S GOING ON, CALLISTO?! STORM'S FIRST ORDER WHEN SHE TOOK OVER THE MORLOCKS WAS FOR YOU TO STOP ATTACKING PEOPLE ON THE SURFACE. THAT INCLUDES X-MEN!
WHEN SHE FINDS OUT YOU'VE KIDNAPPED ME, YOU'LL BE SORRY!

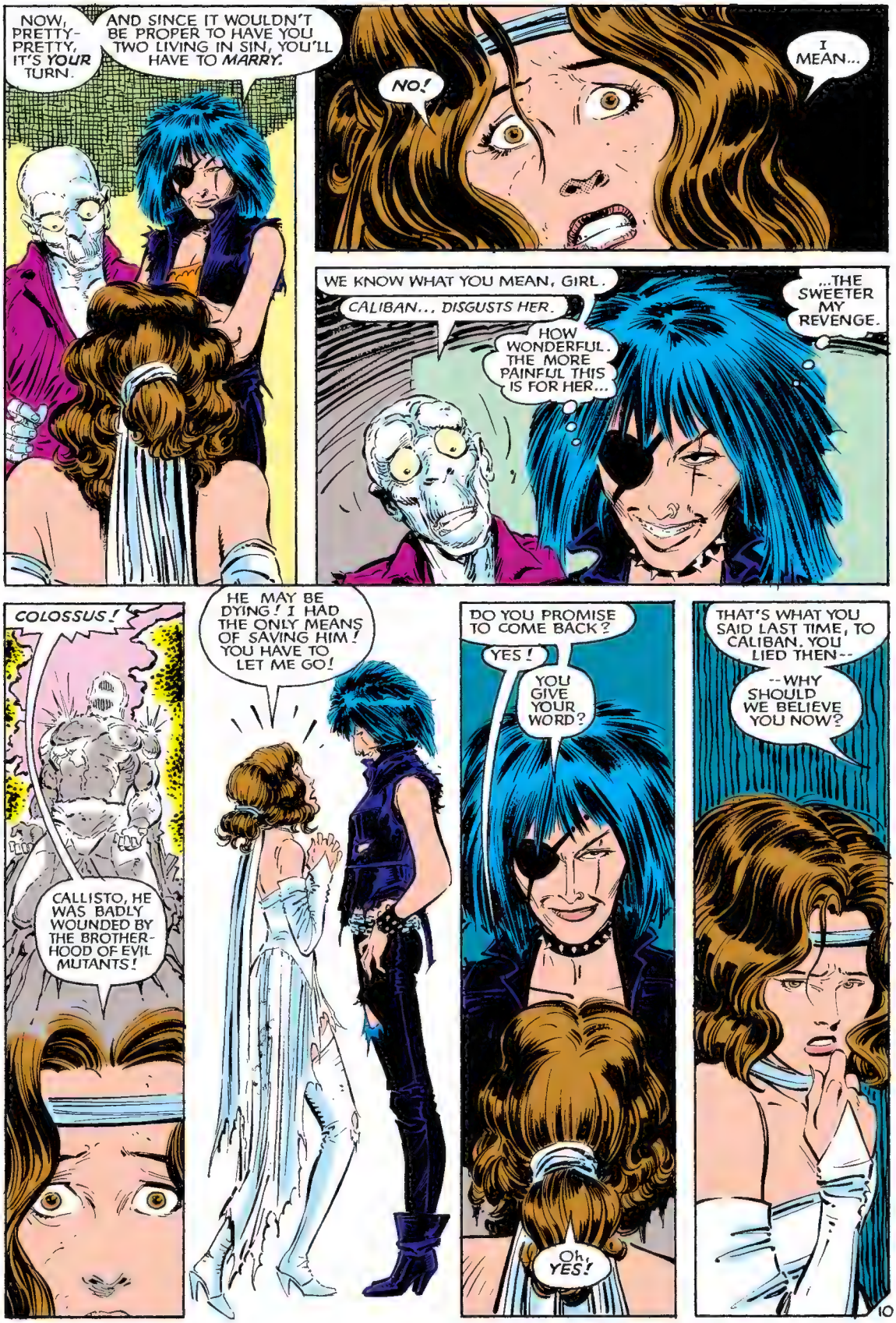

REGRETTABLY, SHE THINKS YOU'RE DEAD.
BESIDES, EVEN IF SHE KNEW THE TRUTH, SHE COULDN'T HELP YOU. WE HAVEN'T VIOLATED HER PRECIOUS RULES --

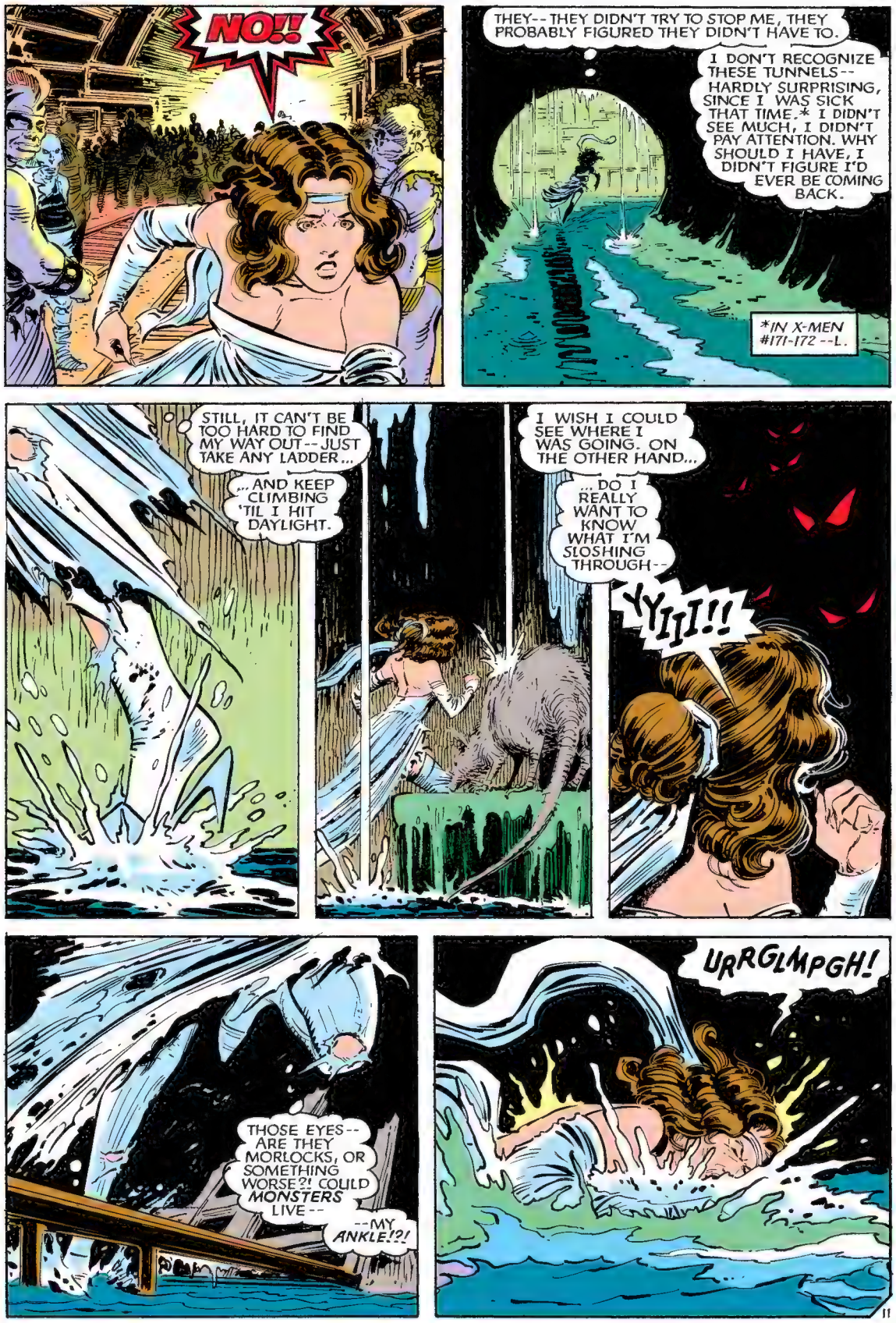
-- MUCH AS WE'D LIKE TO.
WE'VE RETURNED ONE OF OUR OWN TO THE FOLD, SO SHE MIGHT PAY HER DEBTS AND FULFILL A SOLEMN OBLIGATION.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
HOW QUICKLY SOME FORGET. DID YOU OR DID YOU NOT PROMISE...
...THAT IF CALIBAN AIDED THE X-MEN AGAINST ME...

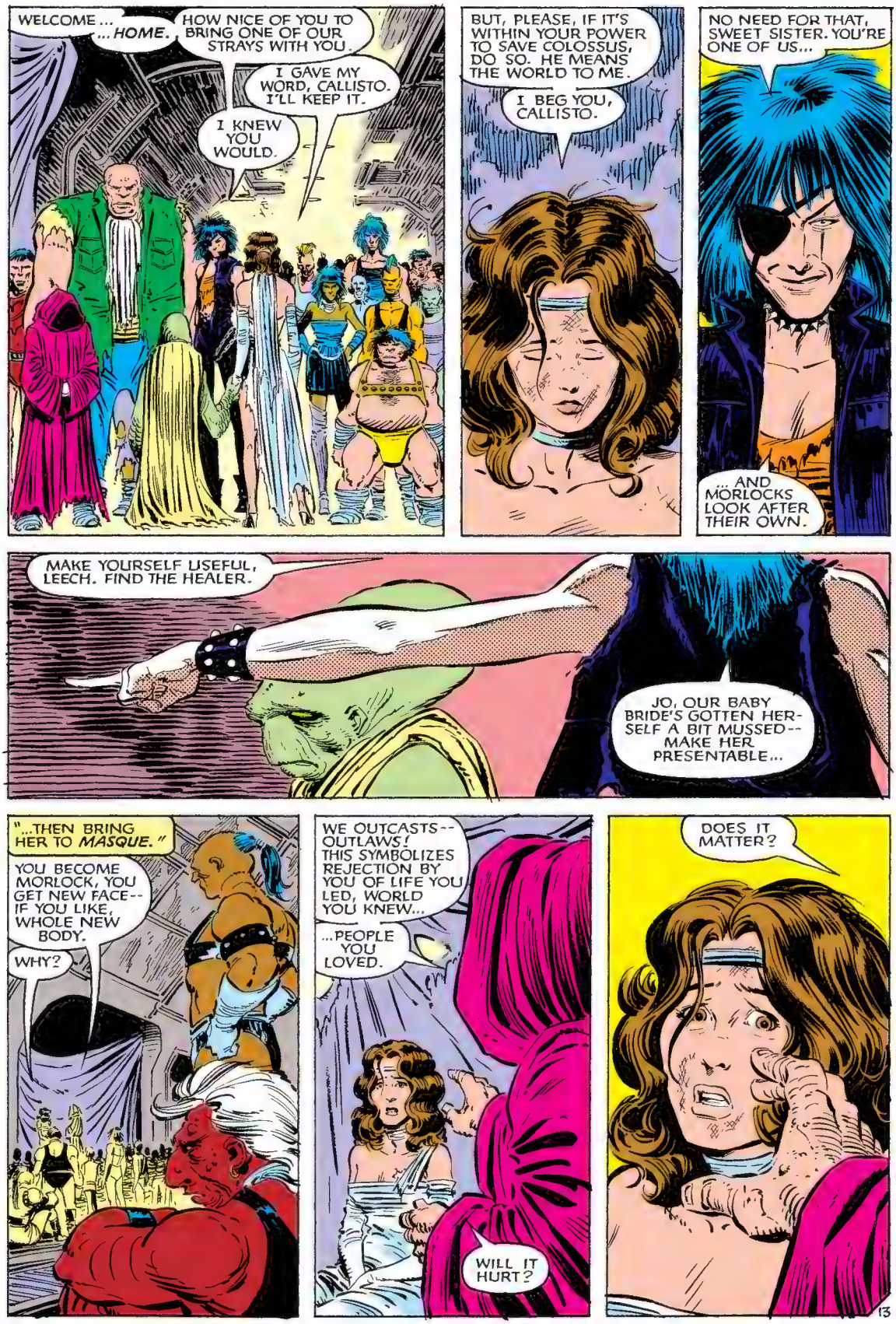
...YOU WOULD STAY WITH HIM FOREVER?
I...
...I...

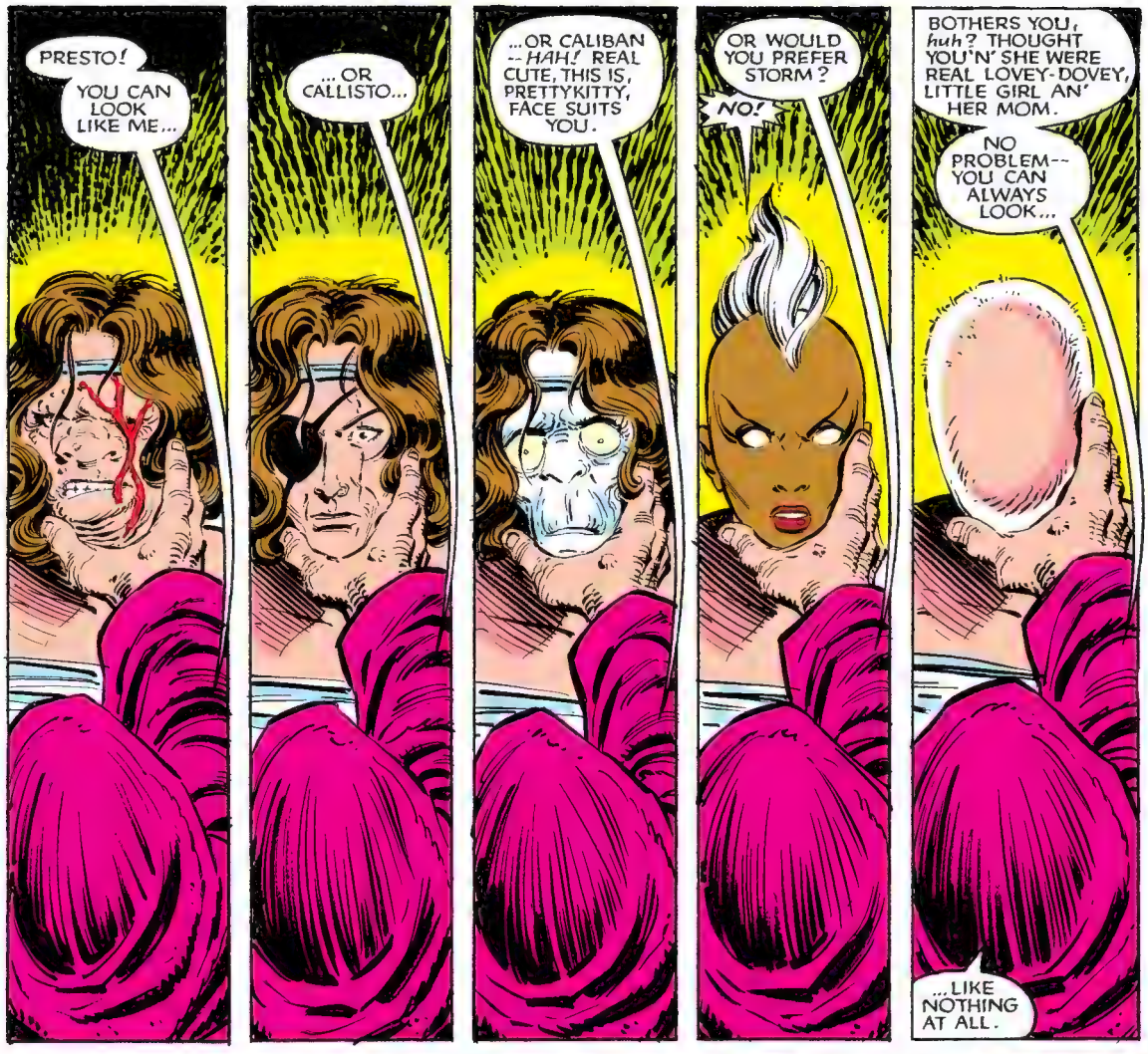

WELL? DID YOU PROMISE?
YES.
AND DID HE CARRY OUT HIS PART OF THE BARGAIN?
YES.

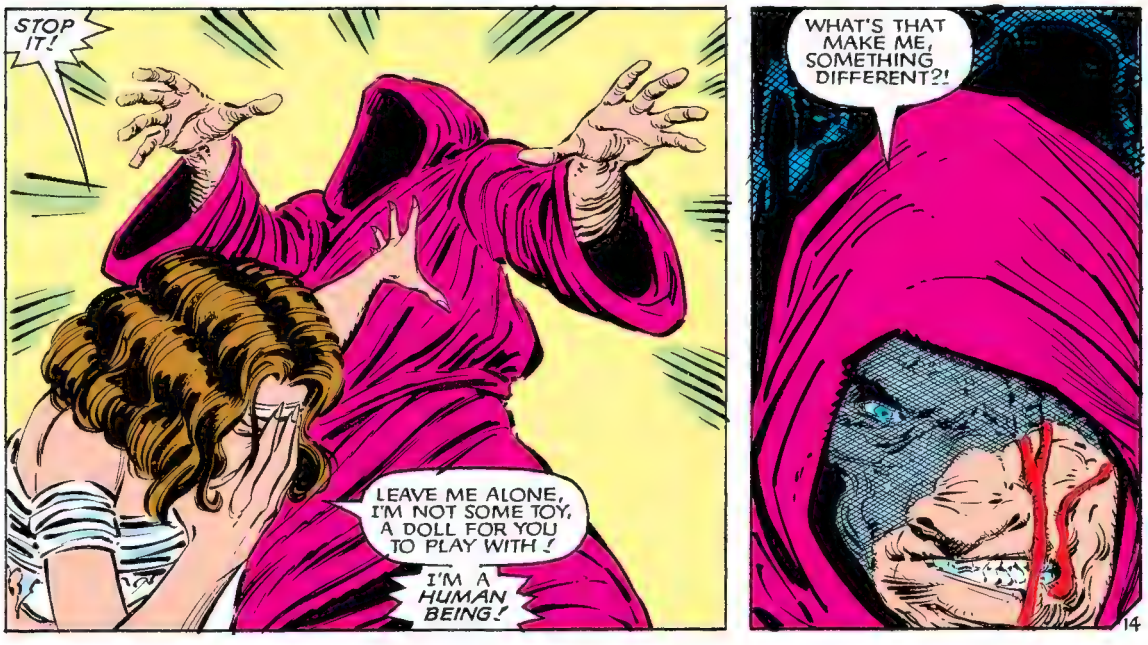

NOW, PRETTY-PRETTY, IT'S YOUR TURN.
AND SINCE IT WOULDN'T BE PROPER TO HAVE YOU TWO LIVING IN SIN, YOU'LL HAVE TO MARRY.
NO!
I MEAN...
WE KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, GIRL.
CALIBAN... DISGUSTS HER.
HOW WONDERFUL. THE MORE PAINFUL THIS IS FOR HER...
...THE SWEETER MY REVENGE.
COLOSSUS!
CALLISTO, HE WAS BADLY WOUNDED BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS!
HE MAY BE DYING! I HAD THE ONLY MEANS OF SAVING HIM! YOU HAVE TO LET ME GO!
DO YOU PROMISE TO COME BACK?
YES!
YOU GIVE YOUR WORD?
Oh, YES!
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID LAST TIME, TO CALIBAN. YOU LIED THEN--
--WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE YOU NOW?

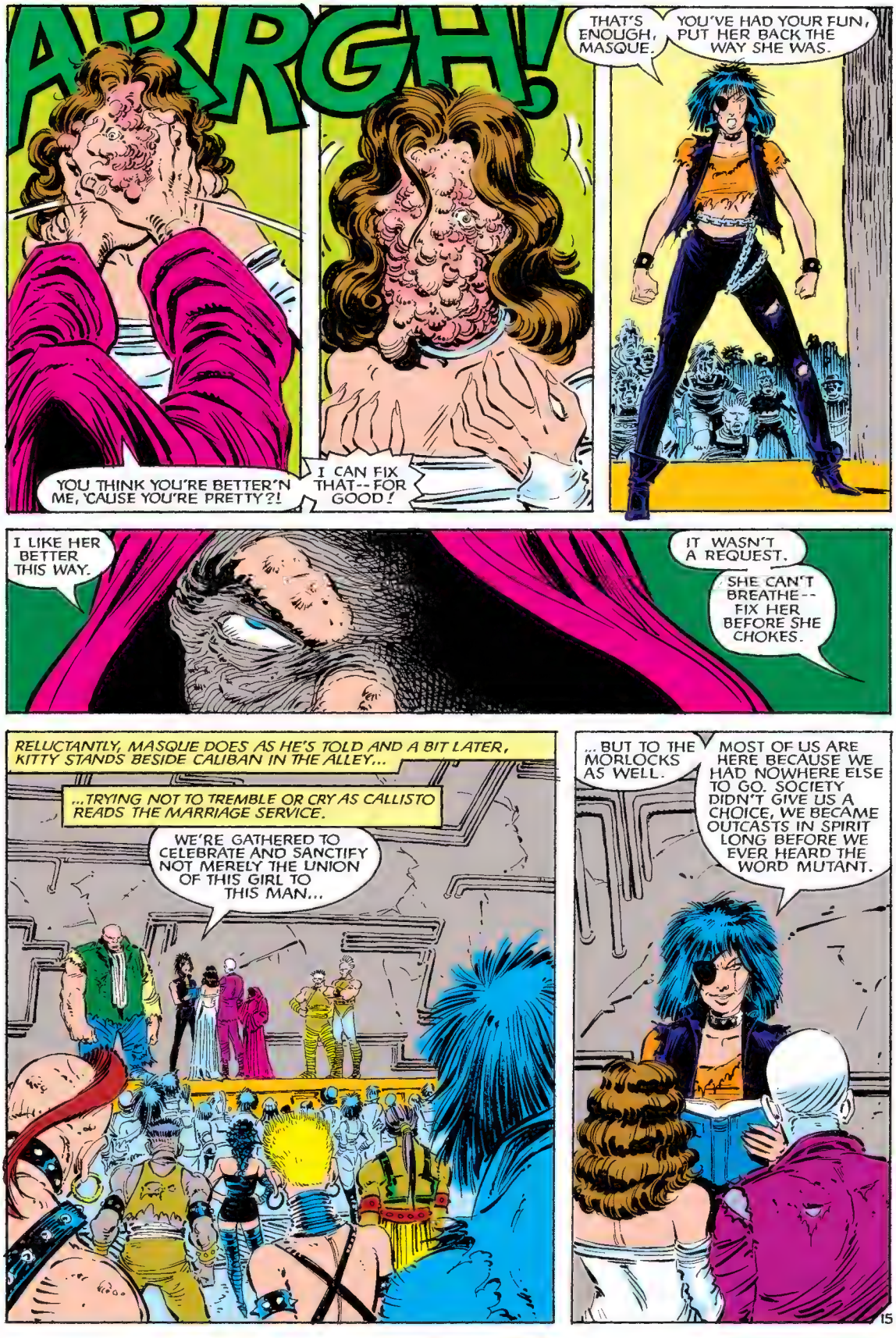

NO!!
THEY-- THEY DIDN'T TRY TO STOP ME, THEY PROBABLY FIGURED THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO.
I DON'T RECOGNIZE THESE TUNNELS-- HARDLY SURPRISING, SINCE I WAS SICK THAT TIME.* I DIDN'T SEE MUCH, I DIDN'T PAY ATTENTION. WHY SHOULD I HAVE, I DIDN'T FIGURE I'D EVER BE COMING BACK.
*IN X-MEN #171-172 --L.
STILL, IT CAN'T BE TOO HARD TO FIND MY WAY OUT-- JUST TAKE ANY LADDER...
...AND KEEP CLIMBING 'TIL I HIT DAYLIGHT.
I WISH I COULD SEE WHERE I WAS GOING. ON THE OTHER HAND...
...DO I REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHAT I'M SLOSHING THROUGH--
YYIII!!
THOSE EYES-- ARE THEY MORLOCKS, OR SOMETHING WORSE?! COULD MONSTERS LIVE--
--MY ANKLE!?!
URRGLMPGH!

CAN'T PHASE, CAN'T RUN--ALL I'M ABLE TO DO IS CRY.
SOME X-MAN I AM. SOME... PERSON.
I CAN SCREAM DENIALS ALL I WANT, IT WON'T CHANGE A THING.
THE X-MEN'S LIVES WERE AT STAKE. CALIBAN WAS MY ONLY HOPE. I THINK I'D HAVE SAID-- AND... DONE-- ANYTHING TO GET HIM TO HELP.
I DIDN'T ASK HIM TO SUCCEED, ONLY TO TRY.
HE WAS NO MATCH FOR CALLISTO, HE COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN GOING TO HIS DEATH. BUT HE HELPED US ANYWAY-- BECAUSE HE LOVED ME.
HE TRUSTED ME WITH HIS HEART...
...AND I BETRAYED HIM!
WHAT HURTS AS MUCH IS THE REALIZATION THAT IF I HAD TO LIE AGAIN-- TO SAVE MY FRIENDS--
--I WOULD.
IS THIS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN X-MAN, THAT I TURN MY BACK ON ALL I WAS EVER TAUGHT ABOUT RIGHT OR WRONG? MY... FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS ABOUT MYSELF?
STORM DID.
WHAT'S THAT?! SOMETHING'S COMING?!!
LOST.
LONELY.
SCARED.
HE TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF, OR ME?
HE'S SO UGLY, HE HAS TO BE A MORLOCK. HE SOUNDS AWFULLY YOUNG.
I SHOULD LEAVE HIM. I SHOULD KEEP RUNNING.
BUT HOW FAR DO I GO...
...TO GET AWAY FROM MY CONSCIENCE?

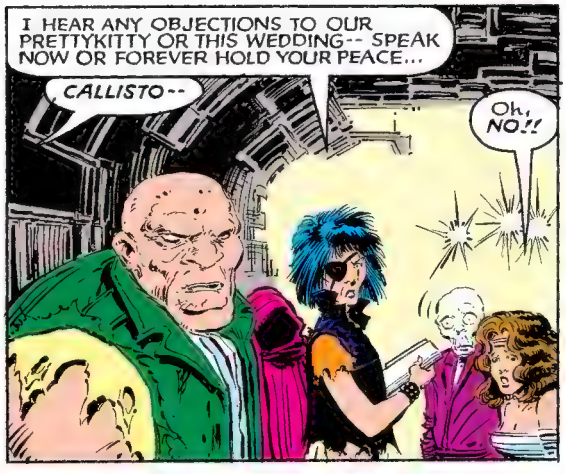

WELCOME ...
...HOME.
HOW NICE OF YOU TO BRING ONE OF OUR STRAYS WITH YOU.
I GAVE MY WORD, CALLISTO. I'LL KEEP IT.
I KNEW YOU WOULD.
BUT, PLEASE, IF IT'S WITHIN YOUR POWER TO SAVE COLOSSUS, DO SO. HE MEANS THE WORLD TO ME.
I BEG YOU, CALLISTO.
NO NEED FOR THAT, SWEET SISTER. YOU'RE ONE OF US...
... AND MORLOCKS LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN.
MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL, LEECH. FIND THE HEALER.
JO, OUR BABY BRIDE'S GOTTEN HERSELF A BIT MUSSED-- MAKE HER PRESENTABLE...
"...THEN BRING HER TO MASQUE."
YOU BECOME MORLOCK, YOU GET NEW FACE-- IF YOU LIKE, WHOLE NEW BODY.
WHY?
WE OUTCASTS-- OUTLAWS! THIS SYMBOLIZES REJECTION BY YOU OF LIFE YOU LED, WORLD YOU KNEW...
...PEOPLE YOU LOVED.
WILL IT HURT?
DOES IT MATTER?


PRESTO!
YOU CAN LOOK LIKE ME...
...OR CALLISTO...
...OR CALIBAN --HAH! REAL CUTE, THIS IS, PRETTYKITTY, FACE SUITS YOU.
OR WOULD YOU PREFER STORM?
NO!
BOTHERS YOU, huh? THOUGHT YOU'N' SHE WERE REAL LOVEY-DOVEY, LITTLE GIRL AN' HER MOM.
NO PROBLEM-- YOU CAN ALWAYS LOOK...
...LIKE NOTHING AT ALL.


STOP IT!
LEAVE ME ALONE, I'M NOT SOME TOY, A DOLL FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH!
I'M A HUMAN BEING!
WHAT'S THAT MAKE ME, SOMETHING DIFFERENT?!


ARRGH!
YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER'N ME, 'CAUSE YOU'RE PRETTY?!
I CAN FIX THAT-- FOR GOOD!
THAT'S ENOUGH, MASQUE.
YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN, PUT HER BACK THE WAY SHE WAS.
I LIKE HER BETTER THIS WAY.
IT WASN'T A REQUEST.
SHE CAN'T BREATHE-- FIX HER BEFORE SHE CHOKES.
RELUCTANTLY, MASQUE DOES AS HE'S TOLD AND A BIT LATER, KITTY STANDS BESIDE CALIBAN IN THE ALLEY...
...TRYING NOT TO TREMBLE OR CRY AS CALLISTO READS THE MARRIAGE SERVICE.
WE'RE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE AND SANCTIFY NOT MERELY THE UNION OF THIS GIRL TO THIS MAN...
...BUT TO THE MORLOCKS AS WELL.
MOST OF US ARE HERE BECAUSE WE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO. SOCIETY DIDN'T GIVE US A CHOICE, WE BECAME OUTCASTS IN SPIRIT LONG BEFORE WE EVER HEARD THE WORD MUTANT.

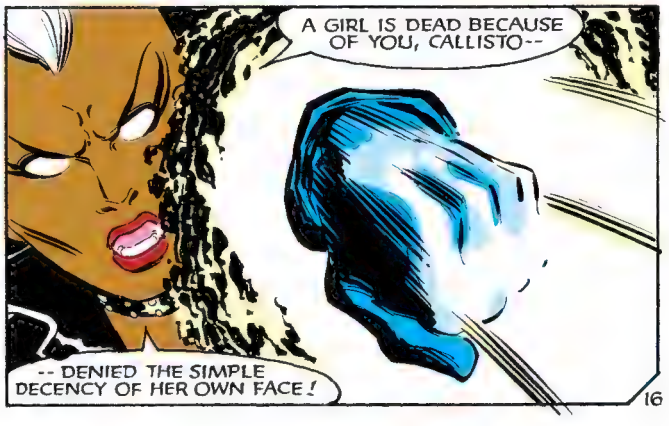
THE KID'S GIVING UP EVERYTHING SHE HOLDS DEAR. WE MAY NOT LIKE HER, BUT WE HAVE TO RESPECT HER COURAGE.
I SURE DIDN'T THINK SHE HAD IT IN HER.

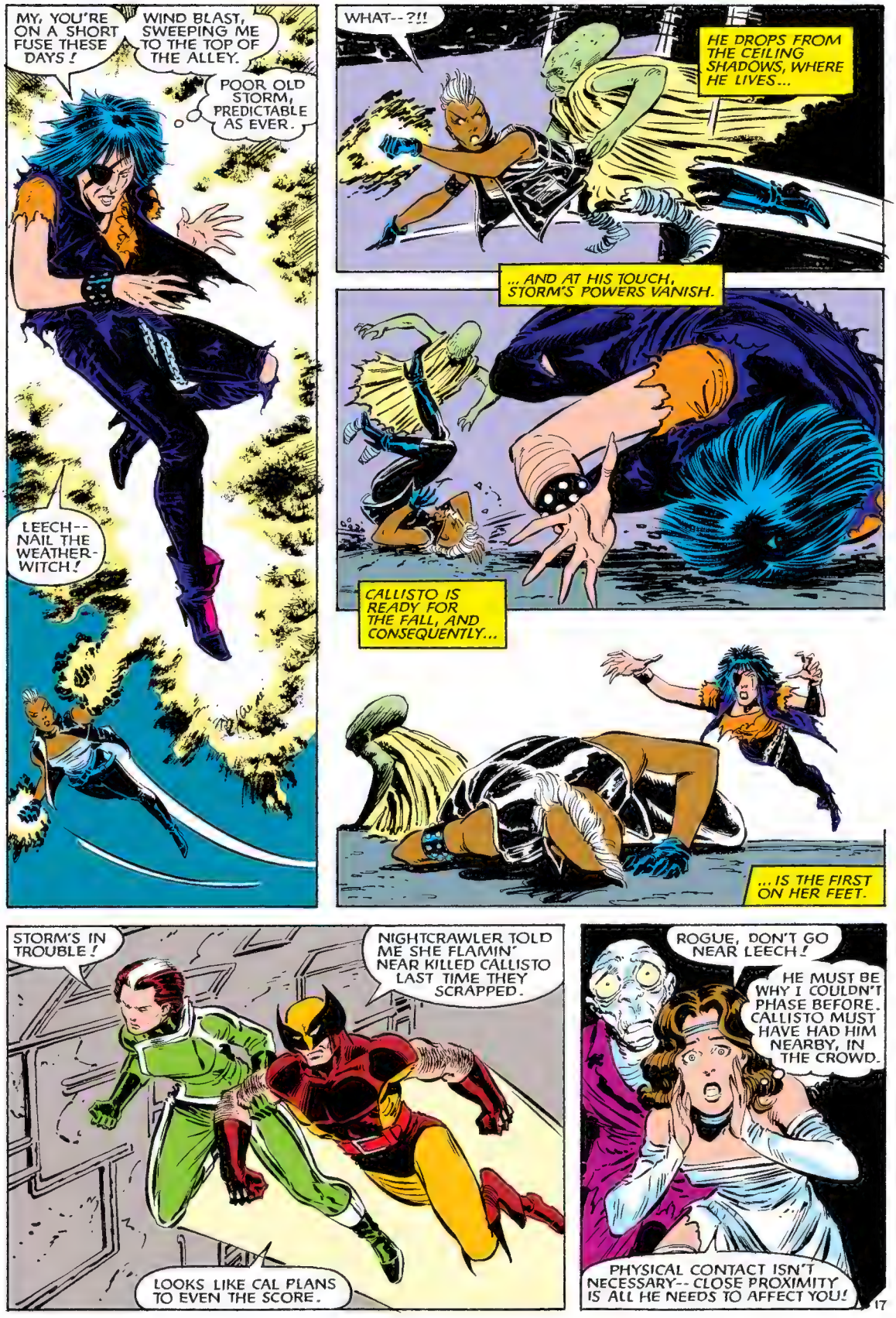

I HEAR ANY OBJECTIONS TO OUR PRETTYKITTY OR THIS WEDDING-- SPEAK NOW OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE...
CALLISTO--
Oh, NO!!

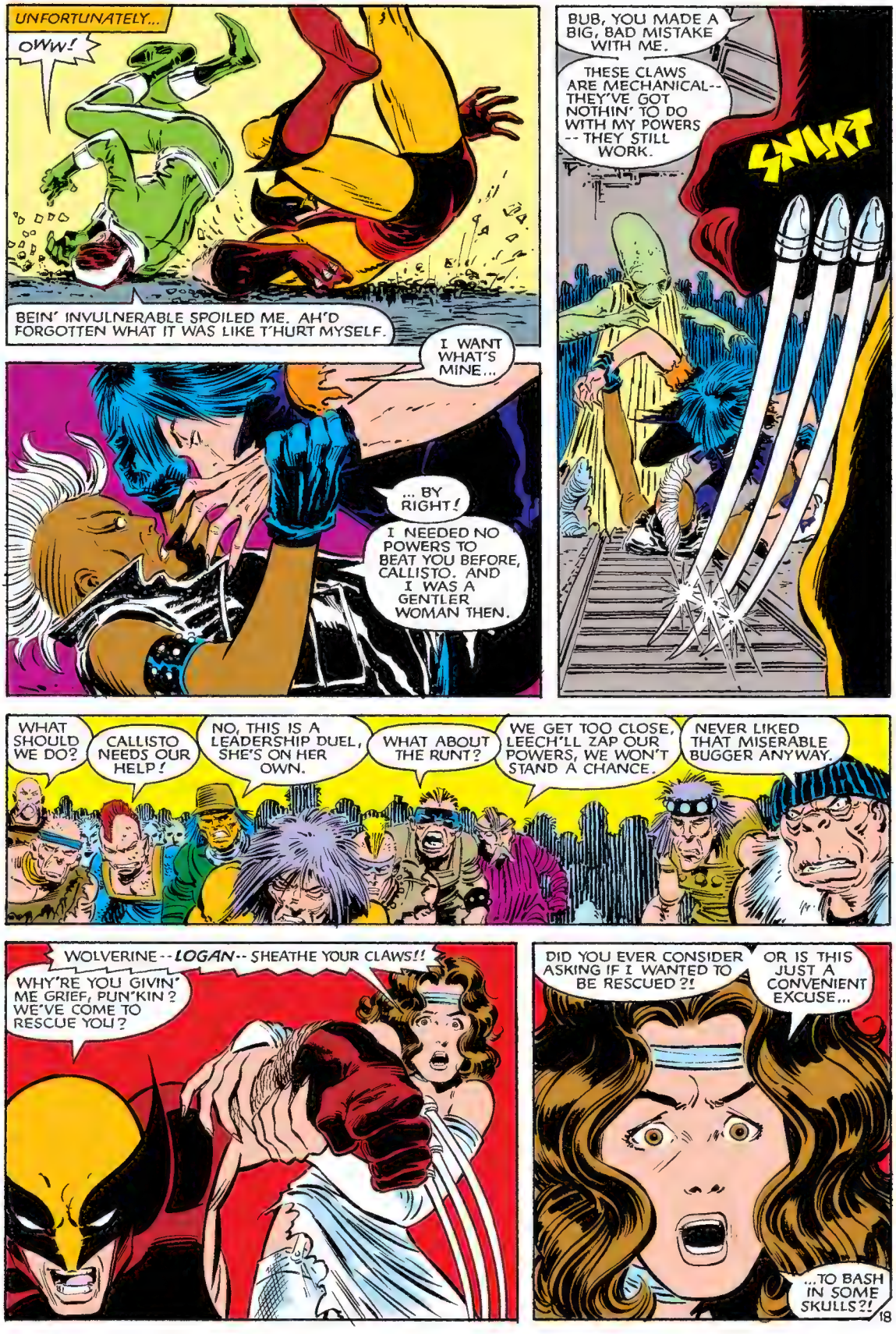
--I DO!
KITTY'S OKAY! THANK HEAVEN! BUT THEN-- WHO'S THE GIRL IN THE MORGUE?
LET'S FIND OUT.

NO, WOLVERINE.
I LEAD THE MORLOCKS. LEAVE THIS TO ME.

STORM, STAY OUT OF THIS!
I'M NOT BEING FORCED, I'M DOING THIS OF MY OWN FREE WILL!
SHE ISN'T LISTENING, WHY WON'T SHE LISTEN?!

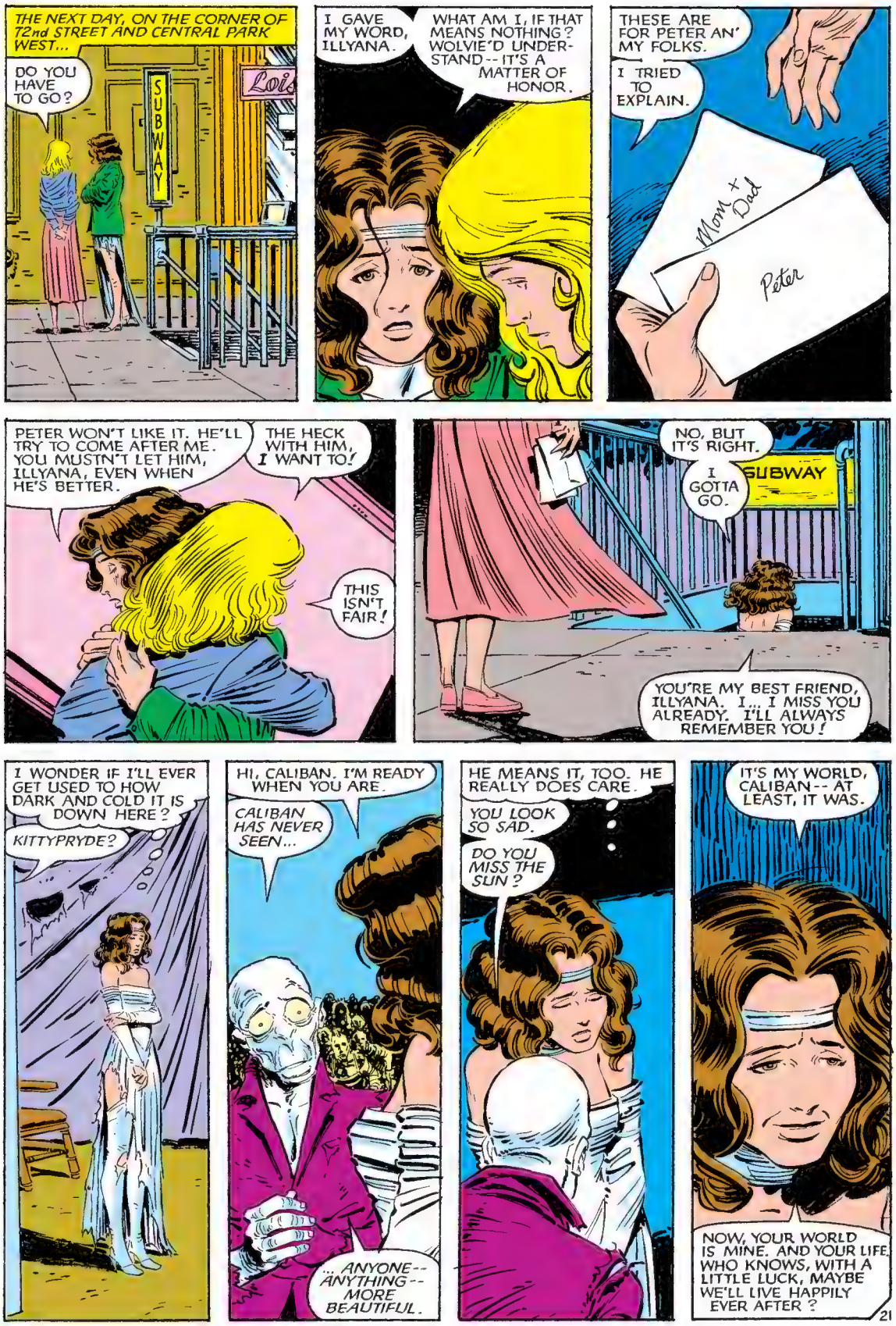

A GIRL IS DEAD BECAUSE OF YOU, CALLISTO--
-- DENIED THE SIMPLE DECENCY OF HER OWN FACE!

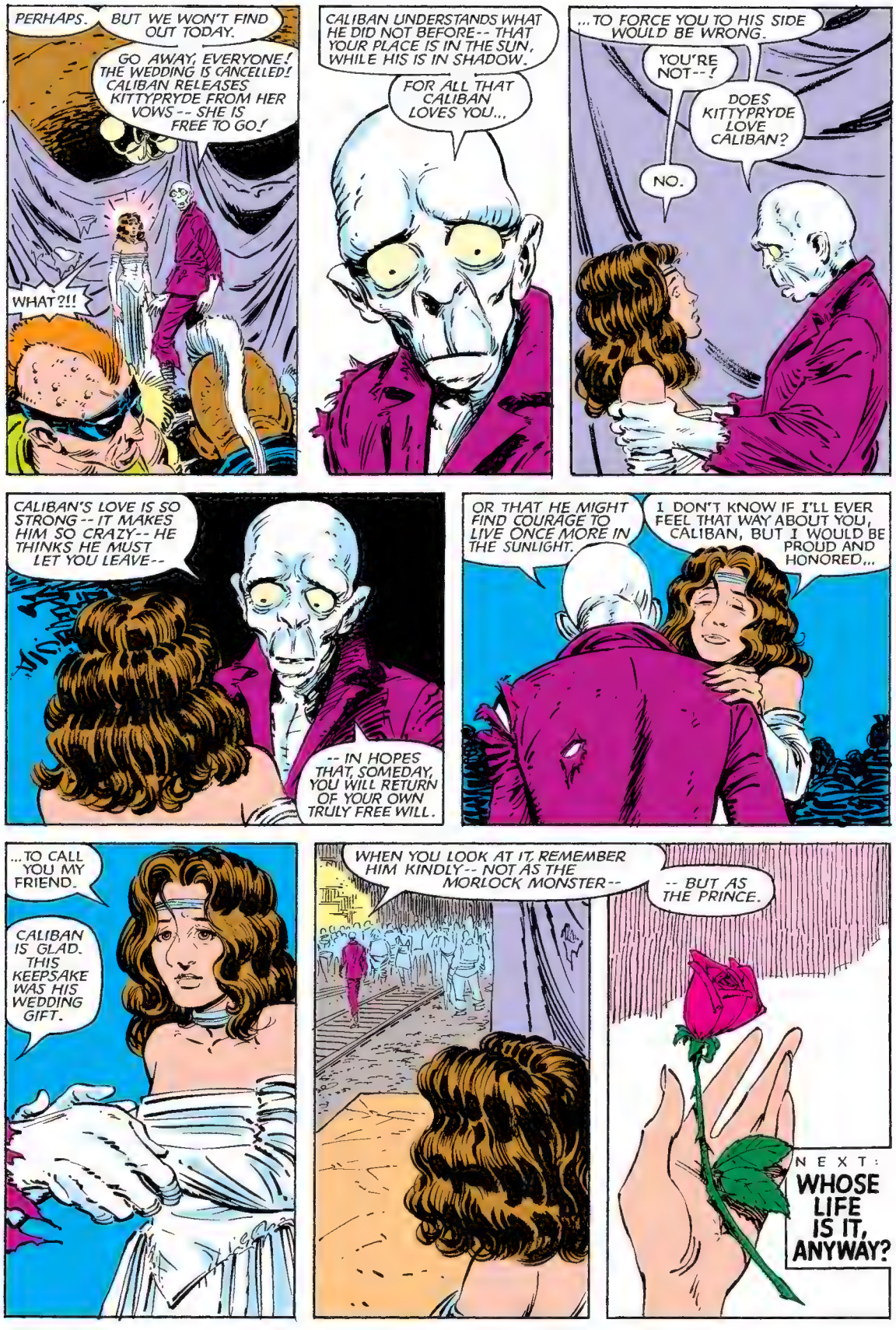

MY, YOU'RE ON A SHORT FUSE THESE DAYS!
WIND BLAST, SWEEPING ME TO THE TOP OF THE ALLEY.
POOR OLD STORM, PREDICTABLE AS EVER.
LEECH-- NAIL THE WEATHER-WITCH!
WHAT--?!!
HE DROPS FROM THE CEILING SHADOWS, WHERE HE LIVES...
... AND AT HIS TOUCH, STORM'S POWERS VANISH.
CALLISTO IS READY FOR THE FALL, AND CONSEQUENTLY...
...IS THE FIRST ON HER FEET.
STORM'S IN TROUBLE!
NIGHTCRAWLER TOLD ME SHE FLAMIN' NEAR KILLED CALLISTO LAST TIME THEY SCRAPPED.
LOOKS LIKE CAL PLANS TO EVEN THE SCORE.
ROGUE, DON'T GO NEAR LEECH!
HE MUST BE WHY I COULDN'T PHASE BEFORE. CALLISTO MUST HAVE HAD HIM NEARBY, IN THE CROWD.
PHYSICAL CONTACT ISN'T NECESSARY-- CLOSE PROXIMITY IS ALL HE NEEDS TO AFFECT YOU!


UNFORTUNATELY...
OWW!
BEIN' INVULNERABLE SPOILED ME. AH'D FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS LIKE T'HURT MYSELF.
I WANT WHAT'S MINE...
... BY RIGHT!
I NEEDED NO POWERS TO BEAT YOU BEFORE, CALLISTO. AND I WAS A GENTLER WOMAN THEN.
BUB, YOU MADE A BIG, BAD MISTAKE WITH ME.
THESE CLAWS ARE MECHANICAL-- THEY'VE GOT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH MY POWERS -- THEY STILL WORK.
SNIKT
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
CALLISTO NEEDS OUR HELP!
NO, THIS IS A LEADERSHIP DUEL, SHE'S ON HER OWN.
WHAT ABOUT THE RUNT?
WE GET TOO CLOSE, LEECH'LL ZAP OUR POWERS, WE WON'T STAND A CHANCE.
NEVER LIKED THAT MISERABLE BUGGER ANYWAY.
WOLVERINE--LOGAN--SHEATHE YOUR CLAWS!!
WHY'RE YOU GIVIN' ME GRIEF, PUN'KIN? WE'VE COME TO RESCUE YOU!
DID YOU EVER CONSIDER ASKING IF I WANTED TO BE RESCUED?!
OR IS THIS JUST A CONVENIENT EXCUSE...
...TO BASH IN SOME SKULLS?!

THIS MESS IS MY FAULT--
--MY RESPONSIBILITY-- AND IT'S UP TO ME ALONE TO RESOLVE IT. I'VE BROUGHT ENOUGH PEOPLE PAIN, I WON'T BE PARTY TO CAUSING ANY MORE.
COLOSSUS IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT-- WITH THE MORLOCKS' HELP, WE MIGHT HAVE A WAY TO SAVE HIM! BUT IF HE DOESN'T MATTER-- IF YOU'D RATHER RIP EACH OTHERS' HEARTS OUT-- WHAT THE HECK, GO RIGHT AHEAD!
KITTY, FORGIVE ME-- I...
...LOST YOUR TEMPER? HAPPENS TO THE BEST OF US, DEAR HEART.
I WANTED TO KILL CALLISTO. I... STILL DO.
WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE KID, X-MEN. WE MEAN TO KEEP IT.
AND SO...
THE HEALER'S POWER AFFECTS WOUNDS, PHYSICAL TRAUMA-- HE SAVED CALLISTO, WHEN STORM STABBED HER THROUGH THE HEART.
I FIGURE, IF ROGUE CAN ABSORB COLOSSUS' POWERS, HE'LL REVERT TO HUMAN FORM. THEN, THE HEALER CAN GO TO WORK BEFORE PETER'S INJURIES CAN KILL HIM.
IT SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE.
AH'VE SHIED AWAY FROM PEOPLE WHOSE POWERS INVOLVE MAJOR PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS-- LIKE ANGEL OR NIGHTCRAWLER-- 'CAUSE AH WASN'T SURE WHAT THAT CHANGE'D DO TO ME. AH LIKE MAH LOOKS THE WAY THEY ARE.
I'LL BE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, ROGUE, MONITORING-- AND, IF NECESSARY, AUGMENTING-- YOUR ABILITIES WITH MY OWN.
AH 'PRECIATE THAT, PROF.
AH WONDER, WILL AH WIND UP LOOKIN' LIKE THE BOY'S S'POSED TO BE-- ALL SHINY STEEL-- OR LIKE HE IS.

COLOSSUS' ARMORED BODY...
... IS ORGANIC, LIVING STEEL, VIRTUALLY INVULNERABLE. BUT IT'S BEEN HEATED WHITE-HOT...
... THEN ENVELOPED IN NEAR ABSOLUTE-ZERO COLD.
THE STRESS IS ALMOST UNENDURABLE, THE PAIN UNIMAGINABLE--
--AS ROGUE QUICKLY DISCOVERS...
... DESPITE XAVIER'S EFFORTS TO SHIELD HER FROM IT.
GODDESS--THE POOR CHILD.
WHATEVER HER PAST, THIS HAS EARNED HER PLACE WITH US.
THE MOMENT PETER RASPUTIN BECOMES HUMAN...
... BLOOD POURS FROM SCORES OF WOUNDS.
HE HAS SECONDS TO LIVE...
... BUT THE MORLOCK HEALER'S TOUCH EXTENDS THAT TO MINUTES...
...THEN TO YEARS--AND FINALLY, TO THE YOUNG RUSSIAN'S ALLOTTED SPAN.
IT IS DONE. IT WILL TAKE THE LAD TIME TO FULLY RECOVER HIS STRENGTH AND VITALITY, BUT HE WILL SURVIVE.


THE NEXT DAY, ON THE CORNER OF 72nd STREET AND CENTRAL PARK WEST...
DO YOU HAVE TO GO?
SUBWAY
Lois
I GAVE MY WORD, ILLYANA.
WHAT AM I, IF THAT MEANS NOTHING? WOLVIE'D UNDERSTAND -- IT'S A MATTER OF HONOR.
THESE ARE FOR PETER AN' MY FOLKS.
I TRIED TO EXPLAIN.
Mom x Dad
Peter
PETER WON'T LIKE IT. HE'LL TRY TO COME AFTER ME. YOU MUSTN'T LET HIM, ILLYANA, EVEN WHEN HE'S BETTER.
THE HECK WITH HIM, I WANT TO!
THIS ISN'T FAIR!
NO, BUT IT'S RIGHT.
I GOTTA GO.
SUBWAY
YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND, ILLYANA. I... I MISS YOU ALREADY. I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU!
I WONDER IF I'LL EVER GET USED TO HOW DARK AND COLD IT IS DOWN HERE?
KITTYPRYDE?
HI, CALIBAN. I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE.
CALIBAN HAS NEVER SEEN...
... ANYONE -- ANYTHING -- MORE BEAUTIFUL.
HE MEANS IT, TOO. HE REALLY DOES CARE.
YOU LOOK SO SAD.
DO YOU MISS THE SUN?
IT'S MY WORLD, CALIBAN -- AT LEAST, IT WAS.
NOW, YOUR WORLD IS MINE. AND YOUR LIFE. WHO KNOWS, WITH A LITTLE LUCK, MAYBE WE'LL LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER?


PERHAPS.
BUT WE WON'T FIND OUT TODAY.
GO AWAY, EVERYONE! THE WEDDING IS CANCELLED! CALIBAN RELEASES KITTYPRYDE FROM HER VOWS -- SHE IS FREE TO GO!
WHAT?!!
CALIBAN UNDERSTANDS WHAT HE DID NOT BEFORE -- THAT YOUR PLACE IS IN THE SUN, WHILE HIS IS IN SHADOW.
FOR ALL THAT CALIBAN LOVES YOU...
...TO FORCE YOU TO HIS SIDE WOULD BE WRONG.
YOU'RE NOT--!
DOES KITTYPRYDE LOVE CALIBAN?
NO.
CALIBAN'S LOVE IS SO STRONG -- IT MAKES HIM SO CRAZY -- HE THINKS HE MUST LET YOU LEAVE--
-- IN HOPES THAT, SOMEDAY, YOU WILL RETURN OF YOUR OWN TRULY FREE WILL.
OR THAT HE MIGHT FIND COURAGE TO LIVE ONCE MORE IN THE SUNLIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER FEEL THAT WAY ABOUT YOU, CALIBAN, BUT I WOULD BE PROUD AND HONORED...
...TO CALL YOU MY FRIEND.
CALIBAN IS GLAD. THIS KEEPSAKE WAS HIS WEDDING GIFT.
WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT, REMEMBER HIM KINDLY -- NOT AS THE MORLOCK MONSTER--
-- BUT AS THE PRINCE.
NEXT:
WHOSE LIFE IS IT, ANYWAY?

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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TM
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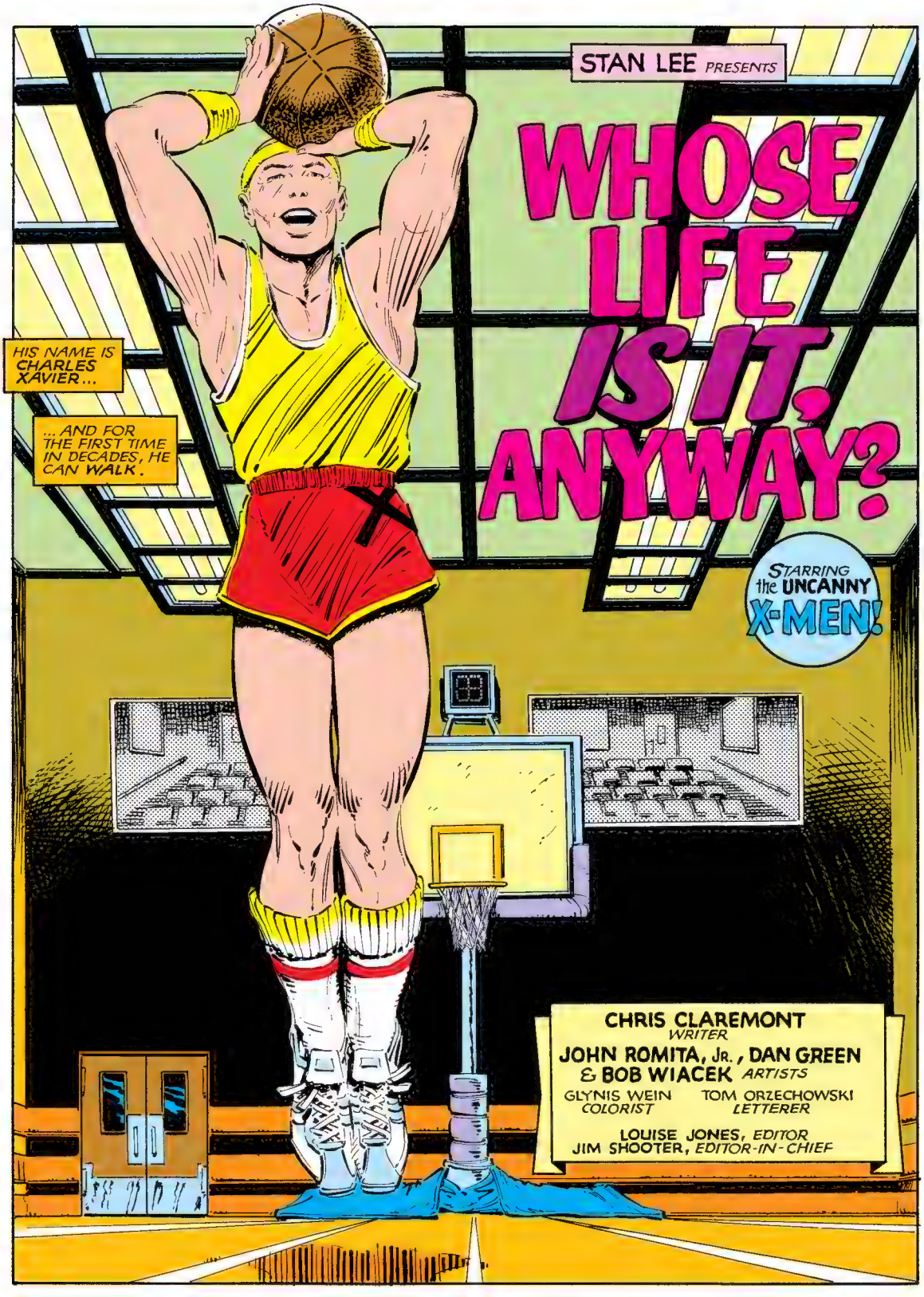
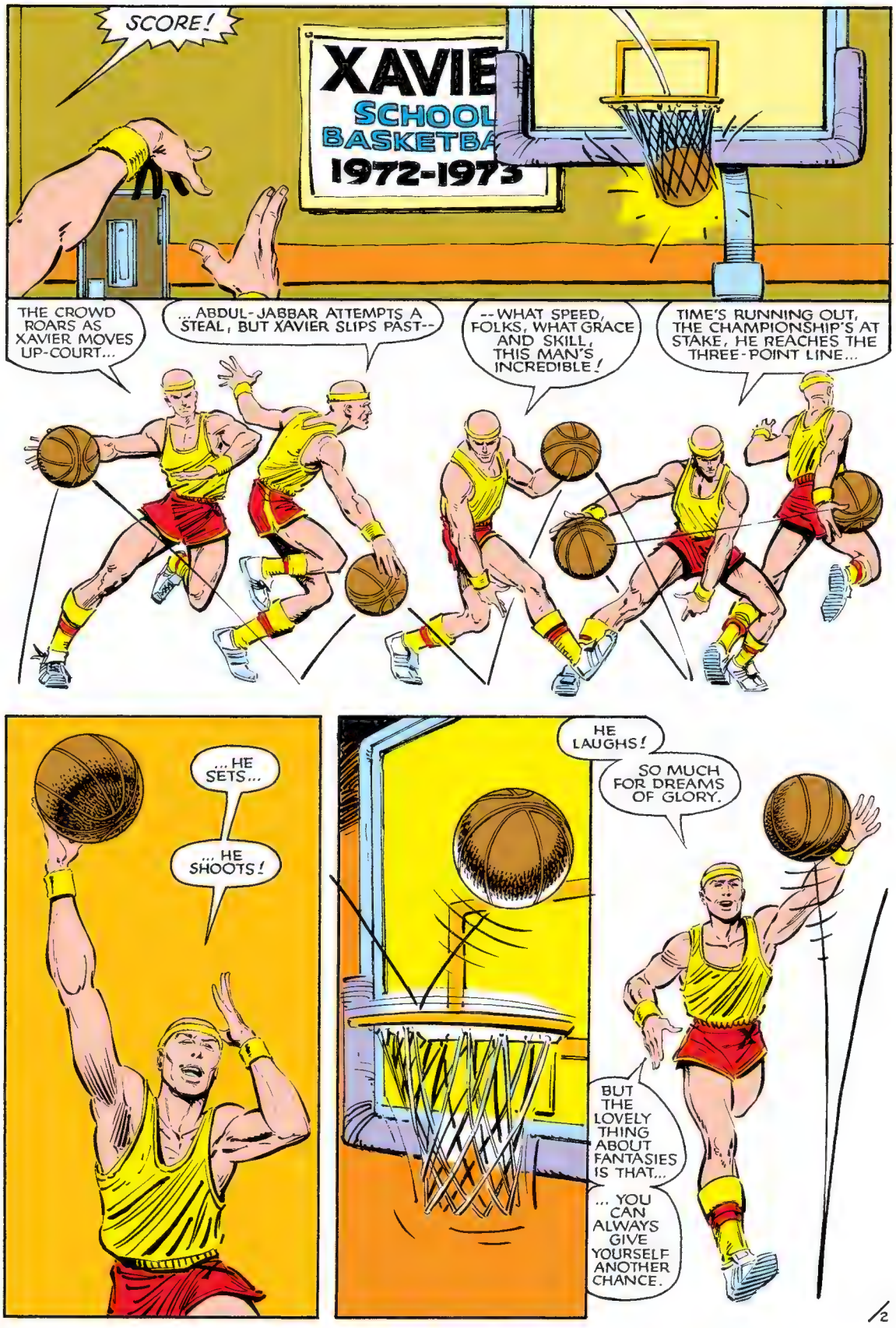
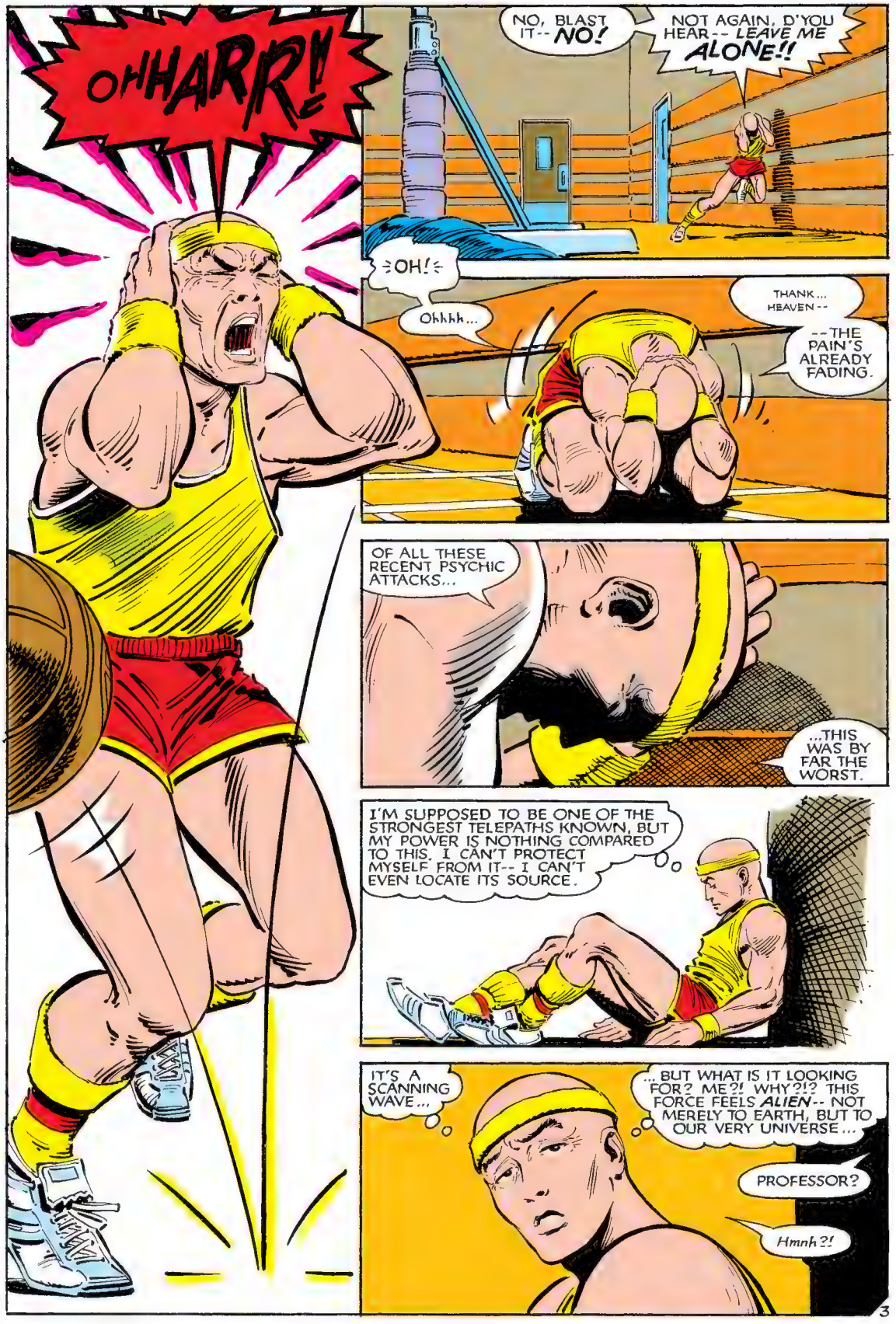
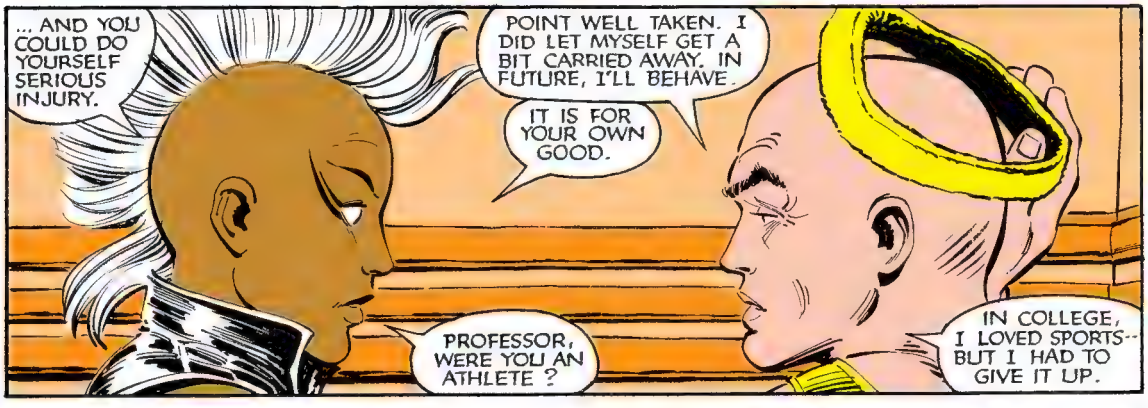

STAN LEE PRESENTS
WHOSE LIFE IS IT, ANYWAY?
STARRING the UNCANNY X-MEN!
HIS NAME IS CHARLES XAVIER...
...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES, HE CAN WALK.
CHRIS CLAREMONT
WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, JR., DAN GREEN & BOB WIACEK ARTISTS
GLYNIS WEIN
COLORIST
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
LETTERER
LOUISE JONES, EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

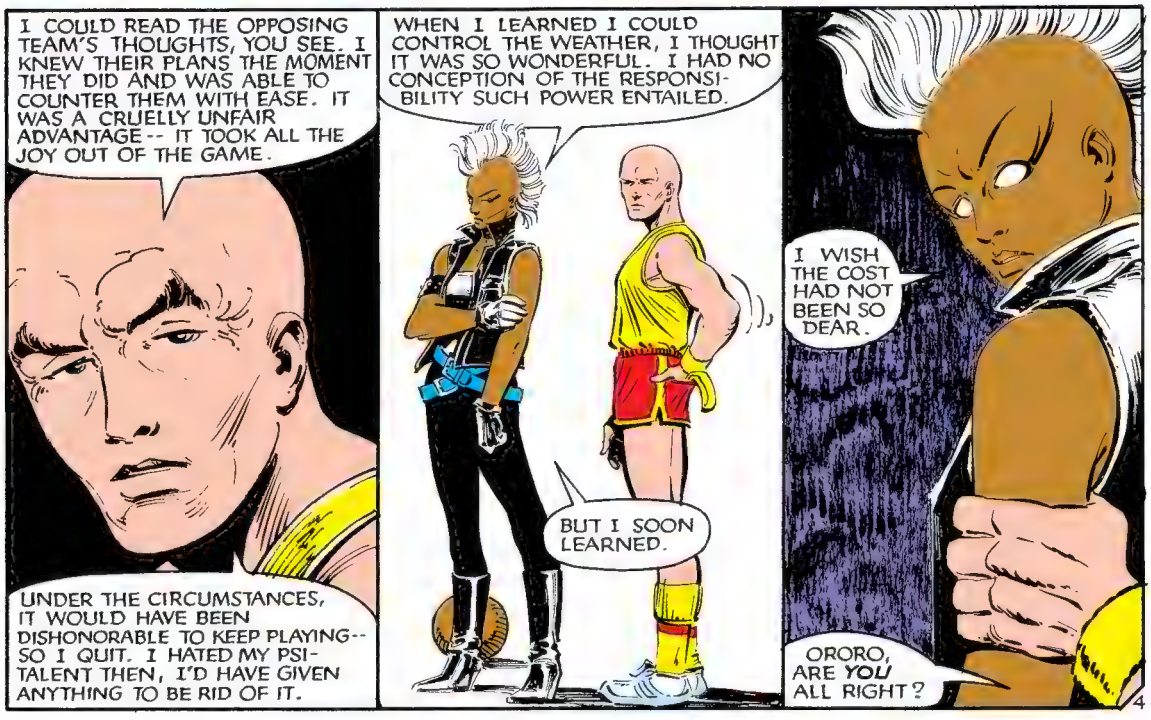

SCORE!
XAVIE
SCHOOL
BASKETBA
1972-1973
THE CROWD ROARS AS XAVIER MOVES UP-COURT...
...ABDUL-JABBAR ATTEMPTS A STEAL, BUT XAVIER SLIPS PAST--
--WHAT SPEED, FOLKS, WHAT GRACE AND SKILL, THIS MAN'S INCREDIBLE!
TIME'S RUNNING OUT, THE CHAMPIONSHIP'S AT STAKE, HE REACHES THE THREE-POINT LINE...
...HE SETS...
...HE SHOOTS!
HE LAUGHS!
SO MUCH FOR DREAMS OF GLORY.
BUT THE LOVELY THING ABOUT FANTASIES IS THAT...
...YOU CAN ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELF ANOTHER CHANCE.


OHHARR!!
NO, BLAST IT-- NO!
NOT AGAIN, D'YOU HEAR-- LEAVE ME ALONE!!
=OH!=
Ohhhh...
THANK... HEAVEN--
--THE PAIN'S ALREADY FADING.
OF ALL THESE RECENT PSYCHIC ATTACKS...
...THIS WAS BY FAR THE WORST.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF THE STRONGEST TELEPATHS KNOWN, BUT MY POWER IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THIS. I CAN'T PROTECT MYSELF FROM IT-- I CAN'T EVEN LOCATE ITS SOURCE.
IT'S A SCANNING WAVE...
...BUT WHAT IS IT LOOKING FOR? ME?! WHY?!? THIS FORCE FEELS ALIEN-- NOT MERELY TO EARTH, BUT TO OUR VERY UNIVERSE...
PROFESSOR?
Hmnh?!

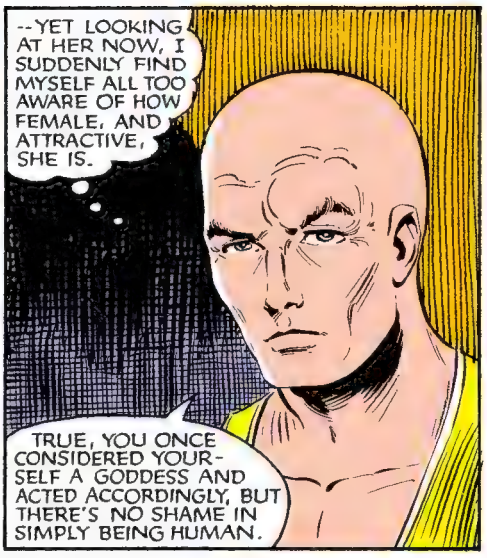
STORM!
I HEARD YOU CRY OUT, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'LL LIVE-- THOUGH I FEAR I'LL ACHE IN THE MORNING.
I UNDER-STAND HOW YOU MUST FEEL...

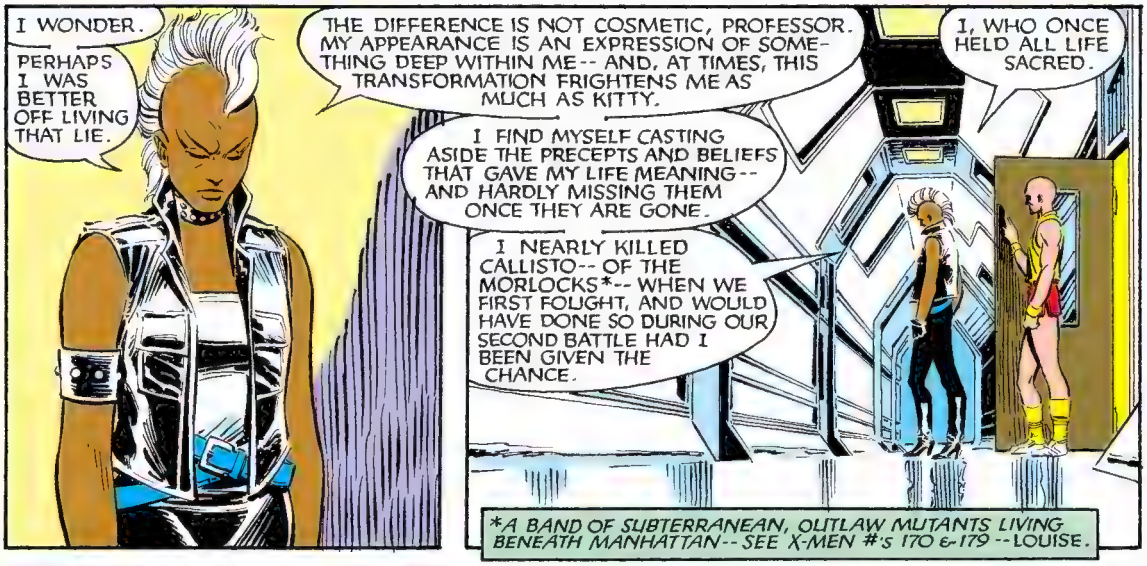
DO YOU?
PROFESSOR, YOU HAVE ONLY RECENTLY RE-GAINED THE USE OF YOUR LEGS. PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD, TOO QUICKLY...


... AND YOU COULD DO YOURSELF SERIOUS INJURY.
POINT WELL TAKEN. I DID LET MYSELF GET A BIT CARRIED AWAY. IN FUTURE, I'LL BEHAVE.
IT IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
PROFESSOR, WERE YOU AN ATHLETE ?
IN COLLEGE, I LOVED SPORTS-- BUT I HAD TO GIVE IT UP.


I COULD READ THE OPPOSING TEAM'S THOUGHTS, YOU SEE. I KNEW THEIR PLANS THE MOMENT THEY DID AND WAS ABLE TO COUNTER THEM WITH EASE. IT WAS A CRUELLY UNFAIR ADVANTAGE-- IT TOOK ALL THE JOY OUT OF THE GAME.
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DISHONORABLE TO KEEP PLAYING-- SO I QUIT. I HATED MY PSI-TALENT THEN, I'D HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING TO BE RID OF IT.
WHEN I LEARNED I COULD CONTROL THE WEATHER, I THOUGHT IT WAS SO WONDERFUL. I HAD NO CONCEPTION OF THE RESPONSI-BILITY SUCH POWER ENTAILED.
BUT I SOON LEARNED.
I WISH THE COST HAD NOT BEEN SO DEAR.
ORORO, ARE *YOU* ALL RIGHT?

NOT ACCORDING TO KITTY. TO HER, I HAVE BECOME A MONSTER.
WELL, YOU'VE CERTAINLY CHANGED.
FOR BETTER OR WORSE?
HOW EXTRAORDINARY! I'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF STORM AS A WOMAN --SHE ALWAYS SEEMED BEYOND SUCH THINGS--

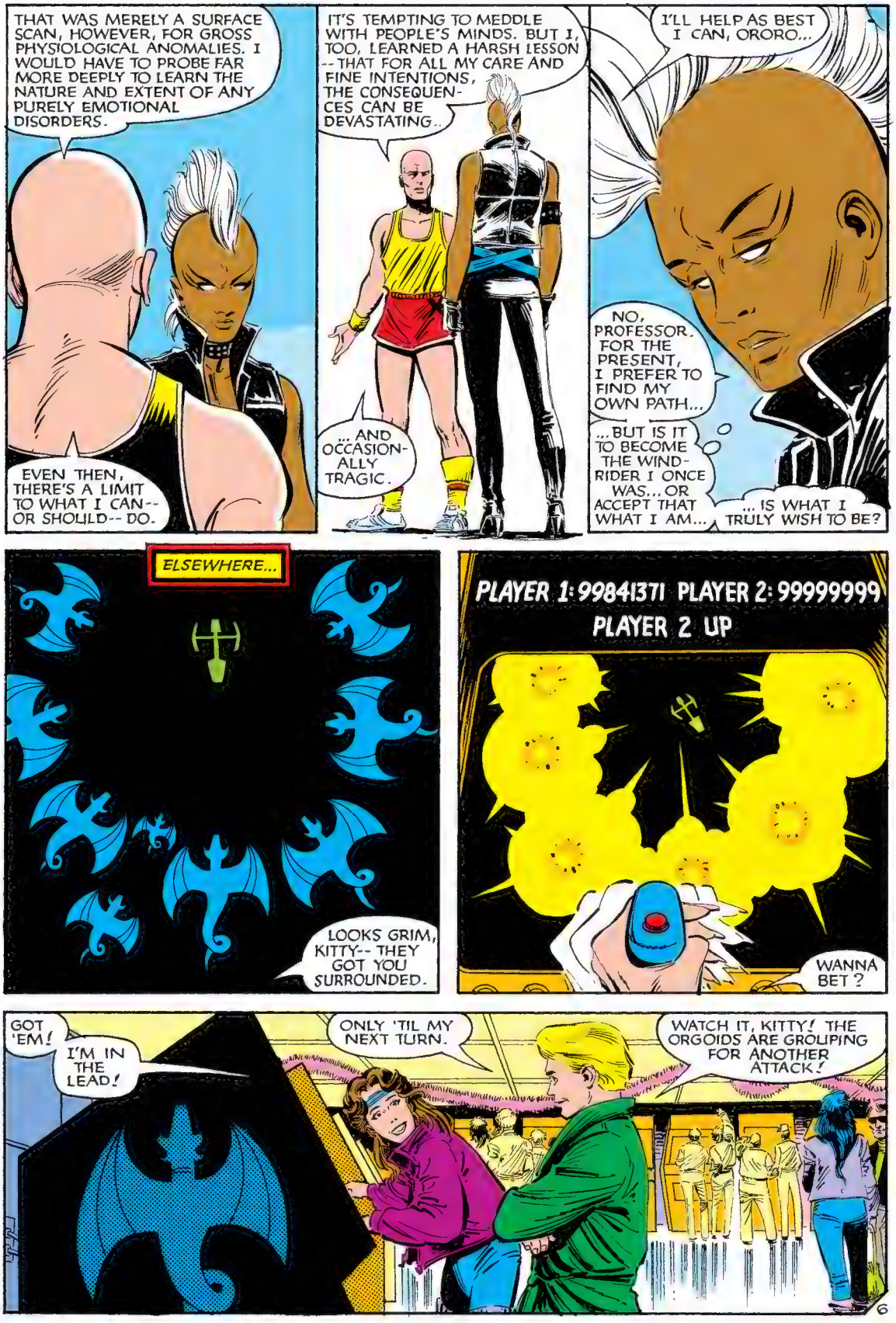

--YET LOOKING AT HER NOW, I SUDDENLY FIND MYSELF ALL TOO AWARE OF HOW FEMALE, AND ATTRACTIVE, SHE IS.
TRUE, YOU ONCE CONSIDERED YOURSELF A GODDESS AND ACTED ACCORDINGLY, BUT THERE'S NO SHAME IN SIMPLY BEING HUMAN.

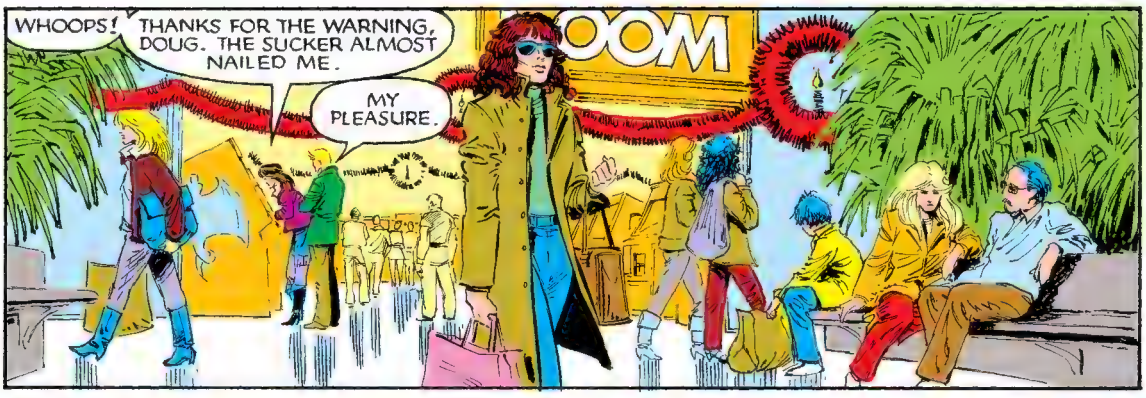

I WONDER.
PERHAPS I WAS BETTER OFF LIVING THAT LIE.
THE DIFFERENCE IS NOT COSMETIC, PROFESSOR. MY APPEARANCE IS AN EXPRESSION OF SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN ME-- AND, AT TIMES, THIS TRANSFORMATION FRIGHTENS ME AS MUCH AS KITTY.
I FIND MYSELF CASTING ASIDE THE PRECEPTS AND BELIEFS THAT GAVE MY LIFE MEANING-- AND HARDLY MISSING THEM ONCE THEY ARE GONE.
I NEARLY KILLED CALLISTO-- OF THE MORLOCKS*-- WHEN WE FIRST FOUGHT, AND WOULD HAVE DONE SO DURING OUR SECOND BATTLE HAD I BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE.
I, WHO ONCE HELD ALL LIFE SACRED.
*A BAND OF SUBTERRANEAN, OUTLAW MUTANTS LIVING BENEATH MANHATTAN-- SEE X-MEN #'s 170 &-179 --LOUISE.

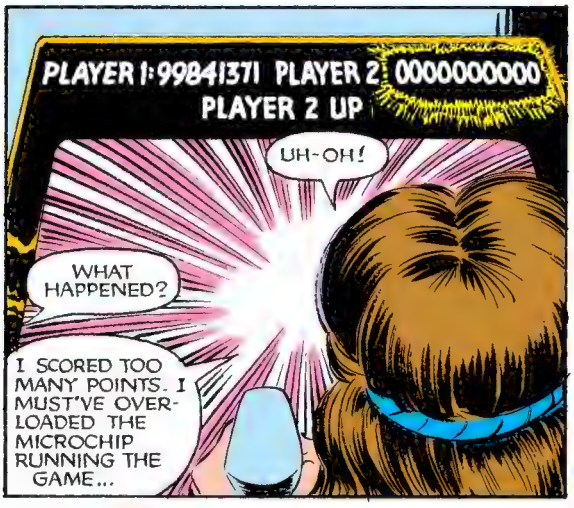
SOMETIMES, I THINK, I FEAR-- I... HOPE--
-- I MUST BE INSANE.

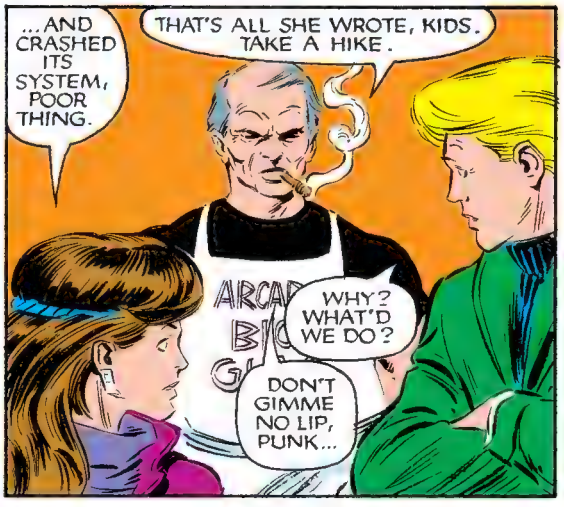
MY PSI-PROBE REVEALS...

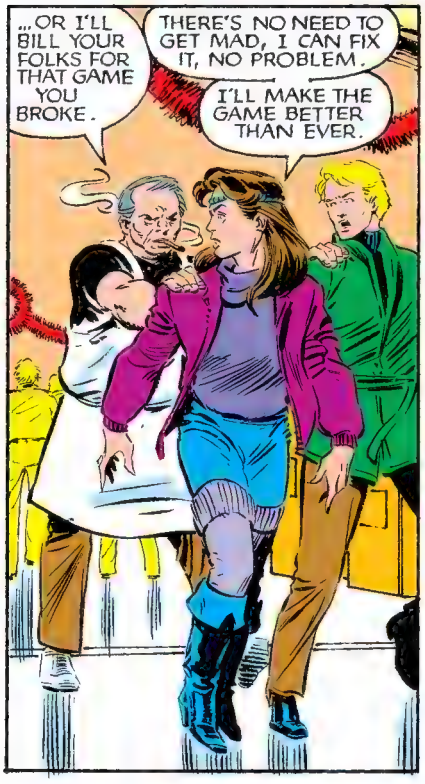
...NO MENTAL ILLNESS.

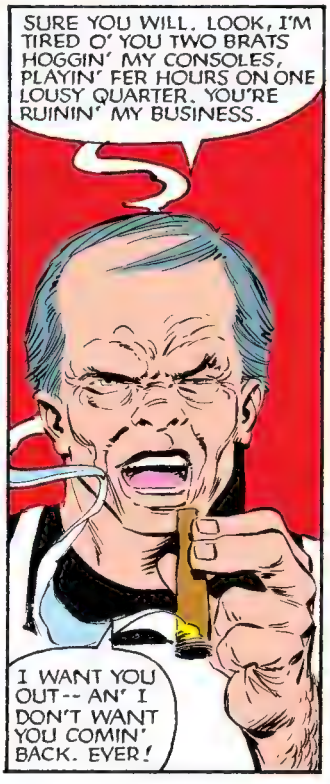

THAT WAS MERELY A SURFACE SCAN, HOWEVER, FOR GROSS PHYSIOLOGICAL ANOMALIES. I WOULD HAVE TO PROBE FAR MORE DEEPLY TO LEARN THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANY PURELY EMOTIONAL DISORDERS.
EVEN THEN, THERE'S A LIMIT TO WHAT I CAN-- OR SHOULD-- DO.
IT'S TEMPTING TO MEDDLE WITH PEOPLE'S MINDS. BUT I, TOO, LEARNED A HARSH LESSON -- THAT FOR ALL MY CARE AND FINE INTENTIONS, THE CONSEQUENCES CAN BE DEVASTATING..
... AND OCCASIONALLY TRAGIC.
I'LL HELP AS BEST I CAN, ORORO...
NO, PROFESSOR. FOR THE PRESENT, I PREFER TO FIND MY OWN PATH...
...BUT IS IT TO BECOME THE WIND-RIDER I ONCE WAS... OR ACCEPT THAT WHAT I AM...
... IS WHAT I TRULY WISH TO BE?
ELSEWHERE...
LOOKS GRIM, KITTY-- THEY GOT YOU SURROUNDED.
PLAYER 1: 99841371 PLAYER 2: 99999999
PLAYER 2 UP
WANNA BET?
GOT 'EM!
I'M IN THE LEAD!
ONLY 'TIL MY NEXT TURN.
WATCH IT, KITTY! THE ORGOIDS ARE GROUPING FOR ANOTHER ATTACK!

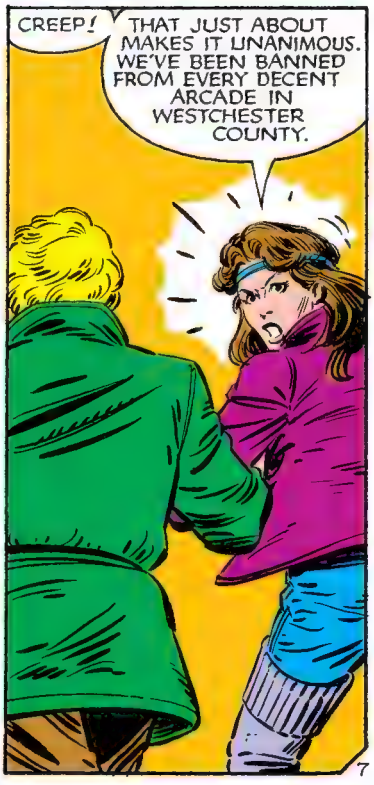

WHOOPS!
THANKS FOR THE WARNING, DOUG. THE SUCKER ALMOST NAILED ME.
MY PLEASURE.
OOM

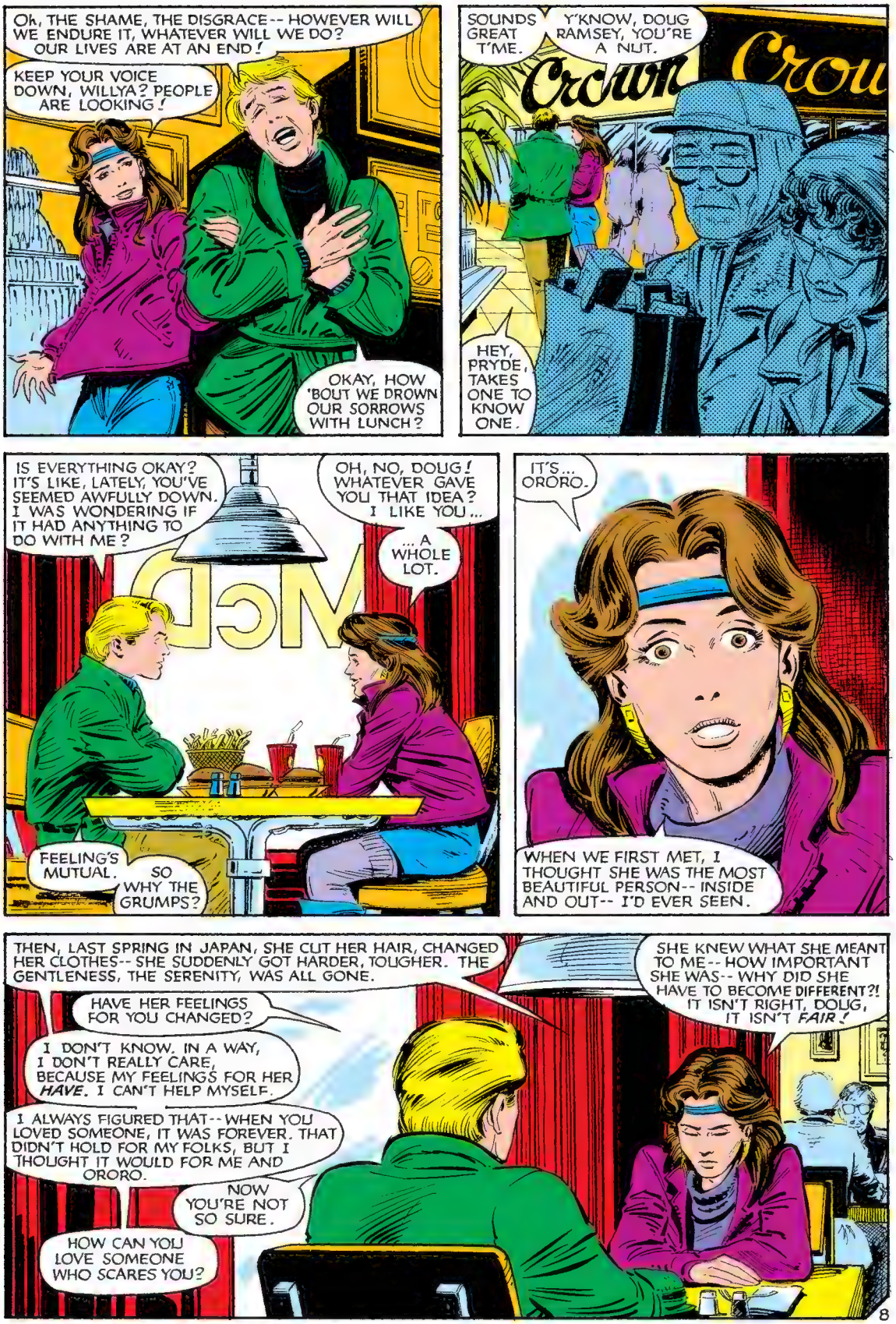

PLAYER 1:9984137I PLAYER 2 0000000000
PLAYER 2 UP
UH-OH!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I SCORED TOO MANY POINTS. I MUST'VE OVER-LOADED THE MICROCHIP RUNNING THE GAME...


...AND CRASHED ITS SYSTEM, POOR THING.
THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE, KIDS. TAKE A HIKE.
WHY? WHAT'D WE DO?
DON'T GIMME NO LIP, PUNK...

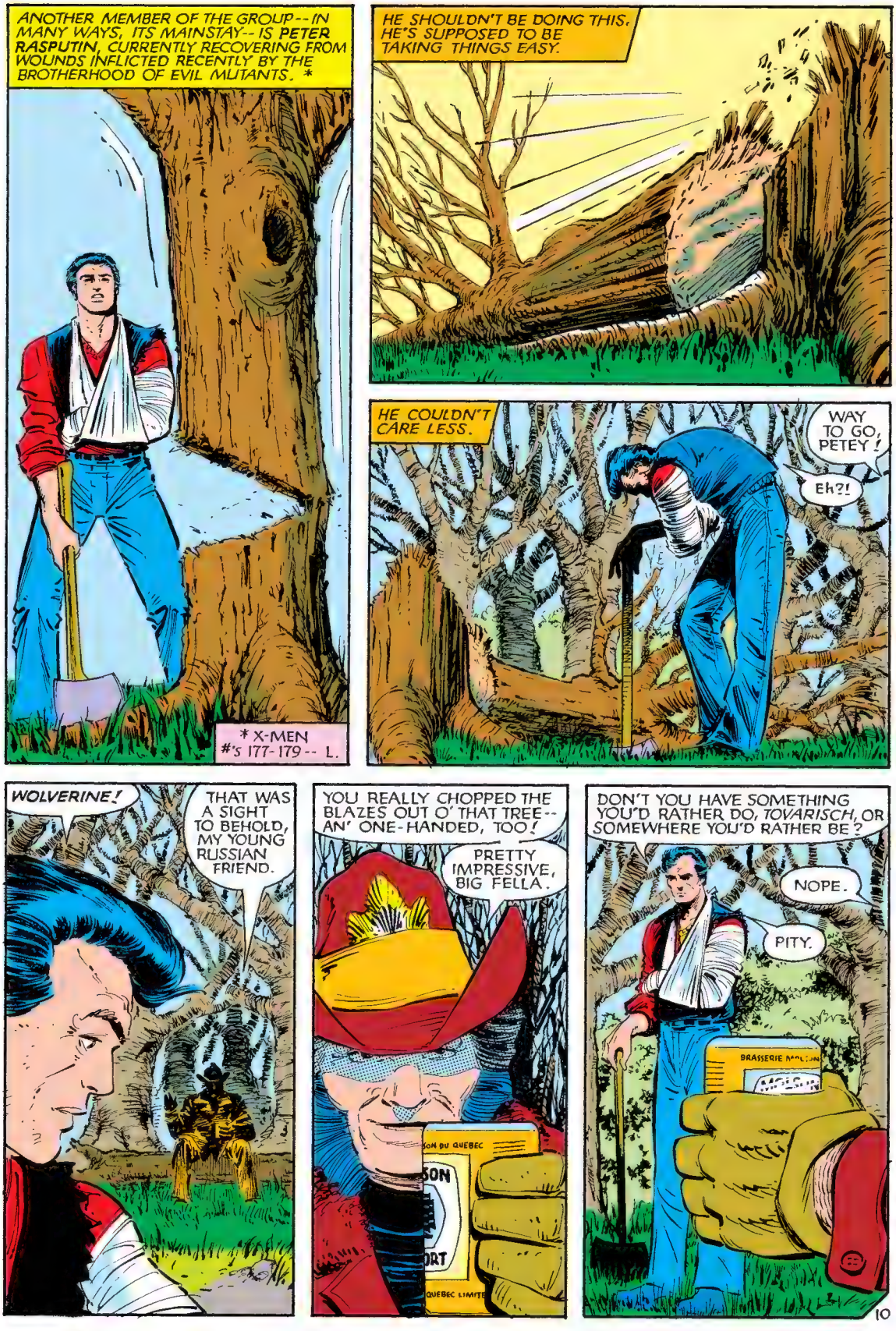

...OR I'LL BILL YOUR FOLKS FOR THAT GAME YOU BROKE.
THERE'S NO NEED TO GET MAD, I CAN FIX IT, NO PROBLEM.
I'LL MAKE THE GAME BETTER THAN EVER.

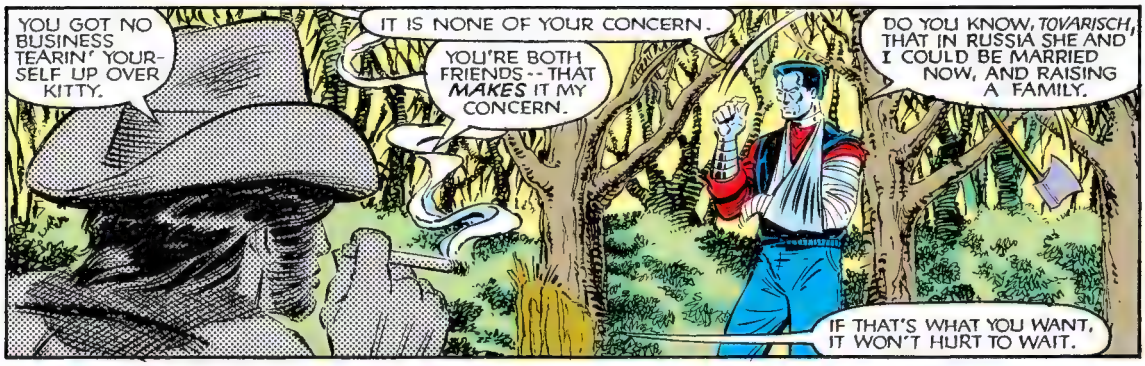

SURE YOU WILL. LOOK, I'M TIRED O' YOU TWO BRATS HOGGIN' MY CONSOLES, PLAYIN' FER HOURS ON ONE LOUSY QUARTER. YOU'RE RUININ' MY BUSINESS.
I WANT YOU OUT-- AN' I DON'T WANT YOU COMIN' BACK. EVER!


CREEP!
THAT JUST ABOUT MAKES IT UNANIMOUS. WE'VE BEEN BANNED FROM EVERY DECENT ARCADE IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY.


Oh, THE SHAME, THE DISGRACE-- HOWEVER WILL WE ENDURE IT, WHATEVER WILL WE DO? OUR LIVES ARE AT AN END!
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, WILLYA? PEOPLE ARE LOOKING!
OKAY, HOW 'BOUT WE DROWN OUR SORROWS WITH LUNCH?
SOUNDS GREAT T'ME.
Y'KNOW, DOUG RAMSEY, YOU'RE A NUT.
Crown
HEY, PRYDE, TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE.
IS EVERYTHING OKAY? IT'S LIKE, LATELY, YOU'VE SEEMED AWFULLY DOWN. I WAS WONDERING IF IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME?
OH, NO, DOUG! WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA? I LIKE YOU...
... A WHOLE LOT.
FEELING'S MUTUAL.
SO WHY THE GRUMPS?
IT'S... ORORO.
WHEN WE FIRST MET, I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PERSON-- INSIDE AND OUT-- I'D EVER SEEN.
THEN, LAST SPRING IN JAPAN, SHE CUT HER HAIR, CHANGED HER CLOTHES-- SHE SUDDENLY GOT HARDER, TOUGHER. THE GENTLENESS, THE SERENITY, WAS ALL GONE.
HAVE HER FEELINGS FOR YOU CHANGED?
I DON'T KNOW. IN A WAY, I DON'T REALLY CARE, BECAUSE MY FEELINGS FOR HER HAVE. I CAN'T HELP MYSELF.
I ALWAYS FIGURED THAT-- WHEN YOU LOVED SOMEONE, IT WAS FOREVER. THAT DIDN'T HOLD FOR MY FOLKS, BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD FOR ME AND ORORO.
NOW YOU'RE NOT SO SURE.
HOW CAN YOU LOVE SOMEONE WHO SCARES YOU?
SHE KNEW WHAT SHE MEANT TO ME-- HOW IMPORTANT SHE WAS-- WHY DID SHE HAVE TO BECOME DIFFERENT?! IT ISN'T RIGHT, DOUG, IT ISN'T FAIR!

I'M SORRY, I SHOULDN'T DUMP THIS ON YOU. IT'S JUST-- ORORO WAS SO SPECIAL-- LIKE MY MOM AND BEST FRIEND BOTH-- AND NOW, SHE'S A STRANGER.
I'M AFRAID, DOUG. I'VE LOST HER FOREVER.
I'M A FRIEND, TOO, KITTY.
WHEN YOU NEED ME, I'LL BE THERE.
YOU MEAN THAT?
SCOUT'S HONOR.
WANT'A HEAR SOME GOOD NEWS? I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT NEXT WEEK AT THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY. I WAS HOPING YOU'D COME ALONG TO SHOW ME THE SCHOOL. YOU WERE A STUDENT THERE...
ONLY FOR A WEEK. I HATED IT.
HOW COME?
CHEMISTRY, I GUESS. I WASN'T CUT OUT TO BE A PREPPIE.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, I'M AN X-MAN-- AND THAT SCHOOL'S RUN BY THE HELLFIRE CLUB...
...OUR NASTIEST ENEMIES, A BUNCH OF EVIL MUTANTS OUT TO CONQUER THE WORLD. I CAN'T LET DOUG GO UP THERE ALONE, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO HIM.
BUT IF I GO WITH HIM, A WHOLE LOT WORSE'LL PROBABLY HAPPEN TO ME. I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING--
-- BUT WHAT?!?
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
THE STUDENTS HERE ARE ALL MUTANTS, THEIR "GIFTS"-- THE EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES THEY WERE BORN WITH, THAT SET THEM APART FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY.
SOME OF THEM-- SUCH AS KITTY PRYDE AND ORORO-- ARE X-MEN, PART OF THE TEAM OF MUTANT SUPER-HEROES FOUNDED BY XAVIER ALONG WITH HIS SCHOOL.


ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP--IN MANY WAYS, ITS MAINSTAY--IS PETER RASPUTIN, CURRENTLY RECOVERING FROM WOUNDS INFLICTED RECENTLY BY THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS. *
* X-MEN #'s 177-179-- L.
HE SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS. HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING THINGS EASY.
HE COULDN'T CARE LESS.
WAY TO GO, PETEY!
Eh?!
WOLVERINE!
THAT WAS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD, MY YOUNG RUSSIAN FRIEND.
YOU REALLY CHOPPED THE BLAZES OUT O' THAT TREE-- AN' ONE-HANDED, TOO!
PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, BIG FELLA.
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU'D RATHER DO, TOVARISCH, OR SOMEWHERE YOU'D RATHER BE?
NOPE.
PITY.
BRASSERIE MOLSON


YOU GOT NO BUSINESS TEARIN' YOURSELF UP OVER KITTY.
IT IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.
YOU'RE BOTH FRIENDS--THAT *MAKES* IT MY CONCERN.
DO YOU KNOW, *TOVARISCH*, THAT IN RUSSIA SHE AND I COULD BE MARRIED NOW, AND RAISING A FAMILY.
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, IT WON'T HURT TO WAIT.

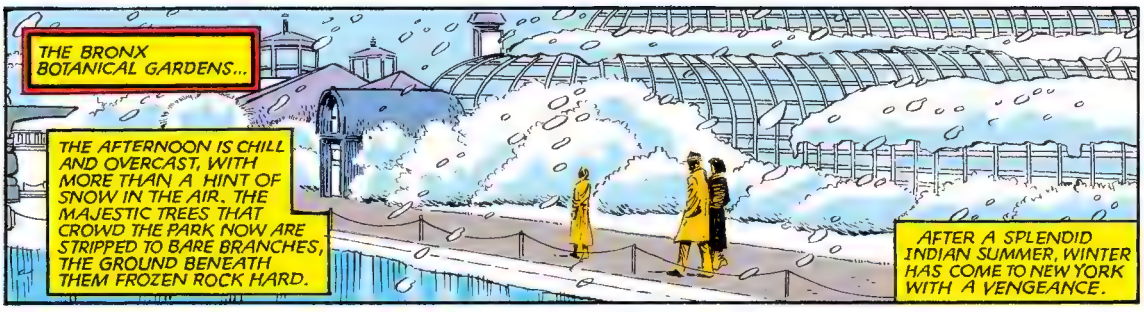
I THOUGHT IT WAS. AND THAT I COULD.
IT NEVER ENTERED MY HEAD THAT KATYA FELT DIFFERENTLY.

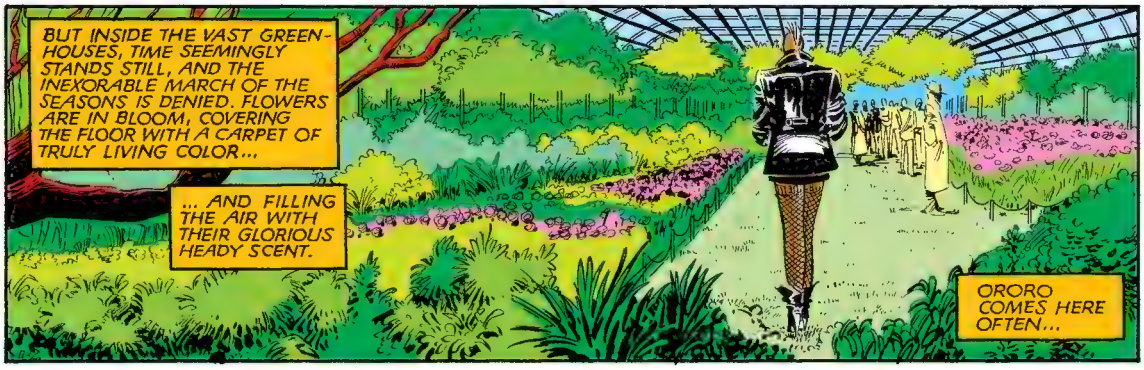
SHE GAVE HERSELF TO THE MORLOCKS TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, BUB. I FIGURE THAT GIVES A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHERE SHE STANDS.

I WISH I WAS AS CERTAIN.
YOU SCARED, BOY?

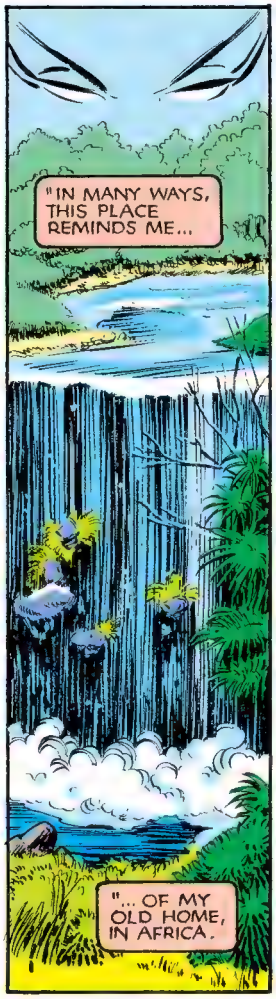
DOUGLAS RAMSEY IS EVERYTHING I AM NOT--AND CAN NEVER BE. WATCHING KITTY WITH HIM, LISTENING TO THEM, BRINGS HOME SOME BRUTAL TRUTHS--
--I AM AN IGNORANT PEASANT, FROM A SOCIETY AND CULTURE AS ALIEN TO HER AS ANY WE'VE ENCOUNTERED IN SPACE.
KITTY WAS A DREAM, MY FRIEND. PERHAPS IT IS TIME AT LAST TO WAKE AND FACE REALITY.

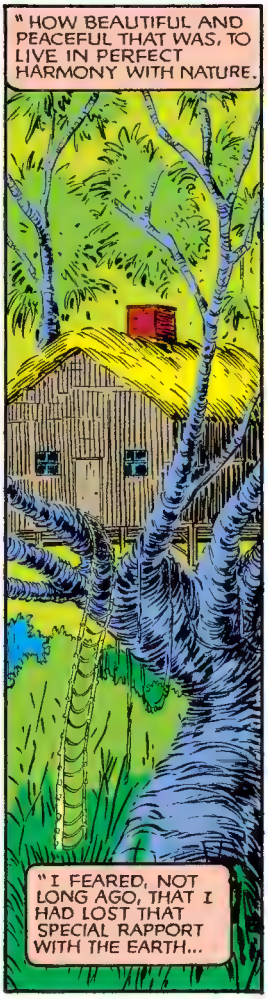
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU TRULY BELIEVE, PETER--ABOUT YOURSELF AS WELL AS HER--
--YOU'VE LOST ALREADY, MORE THAN YOU KNOW.

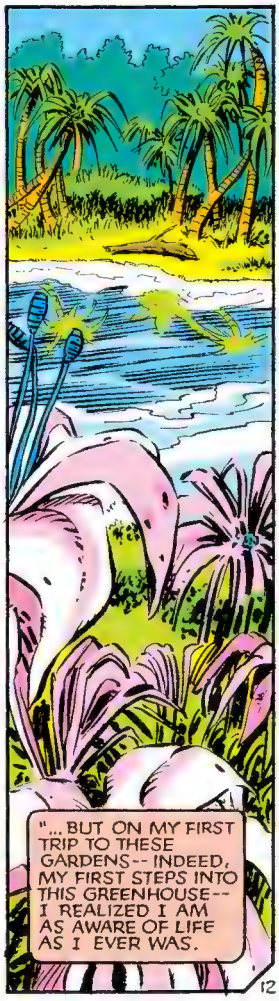

THE BRONX BOTANICAL GARDENS...
THE AFTERNOON IS CHILL AND OVERCAST, WITH MORE THAN A HINT OF SNOW IN THE AIR. THE MAJESTIC TREES THAT CROWD THE PARK NOW ARE STRIPPED TO BARE BRANCHES, THE GROUND BENEATH THEM FROZEN ROCK HARD.
AFTER A SPLENDID INDIAN SUMMER, WINTER HAS COME TO NEW YORK WITH A VENGEANCE.

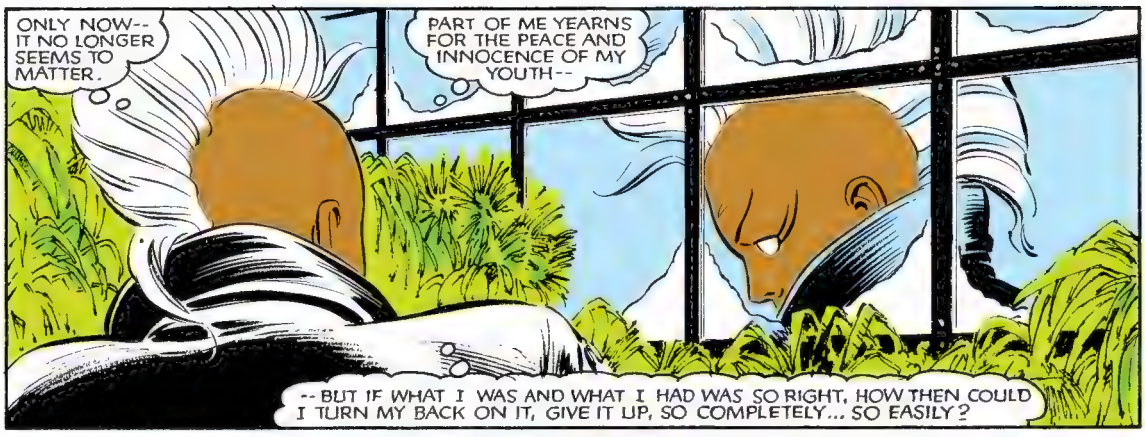

BUT INSIDE THE VAST GREENHOUSES, TIME SEEMINGLY STANDS STILL, AND THE INEXORABLE MARCH OF THE SEASONS IS DENIED. FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM, COVERING THE FLOOR WITH A CARPET OF TRULY LIVING COLOR...
... AND FILLING THE AIR WITH THEIR GLORIOUS HEADY SCENT.
ORORO COMES HERE OFTEN...

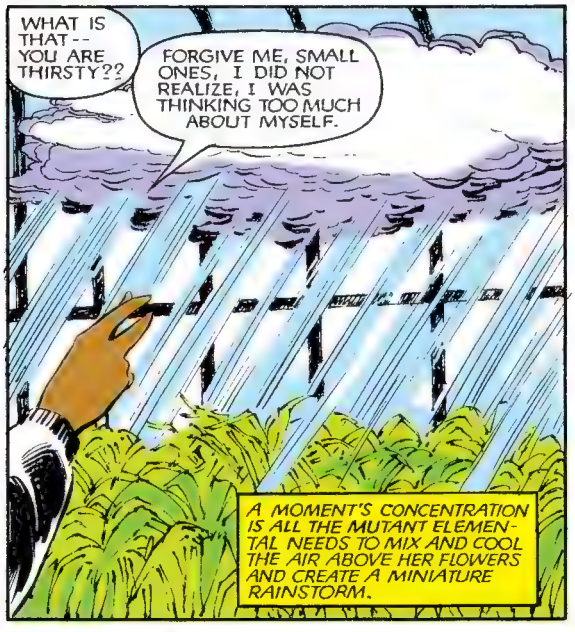
...TO VISIT OLD, DEAR FRIENDS-- THE BLOSSOMS THAT ONCE GRACED HER ATTIC LOFT AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL.
MISSED ME, MY LITTLE ONES? IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO.
HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEW HOME? ARE YOU BEING TREATED WELL?


"IN MANY WAYS, THIS PLACE REMINDS ME...
"... OF MY OLD HOME, IN AFRICA.


"HOW BEAUTIFUL AND PEACEFUL THAT WAS, TO LIVE IN PERFECT HARMONY WITH NATURE.
"I FEARED, NOT LONG AGO, THAT I HAD LOST THAT SPECIAL RAPPORT WITH THE EARTH...


"... BUT ON MY FIRST TRIP TO THESE GARDENS-- INDEED, MY FIRST STEPS INTO THIS GREENHOUSE-- I REALIZED I AM AS AWARE OF LIFE AS I EVER WAS.

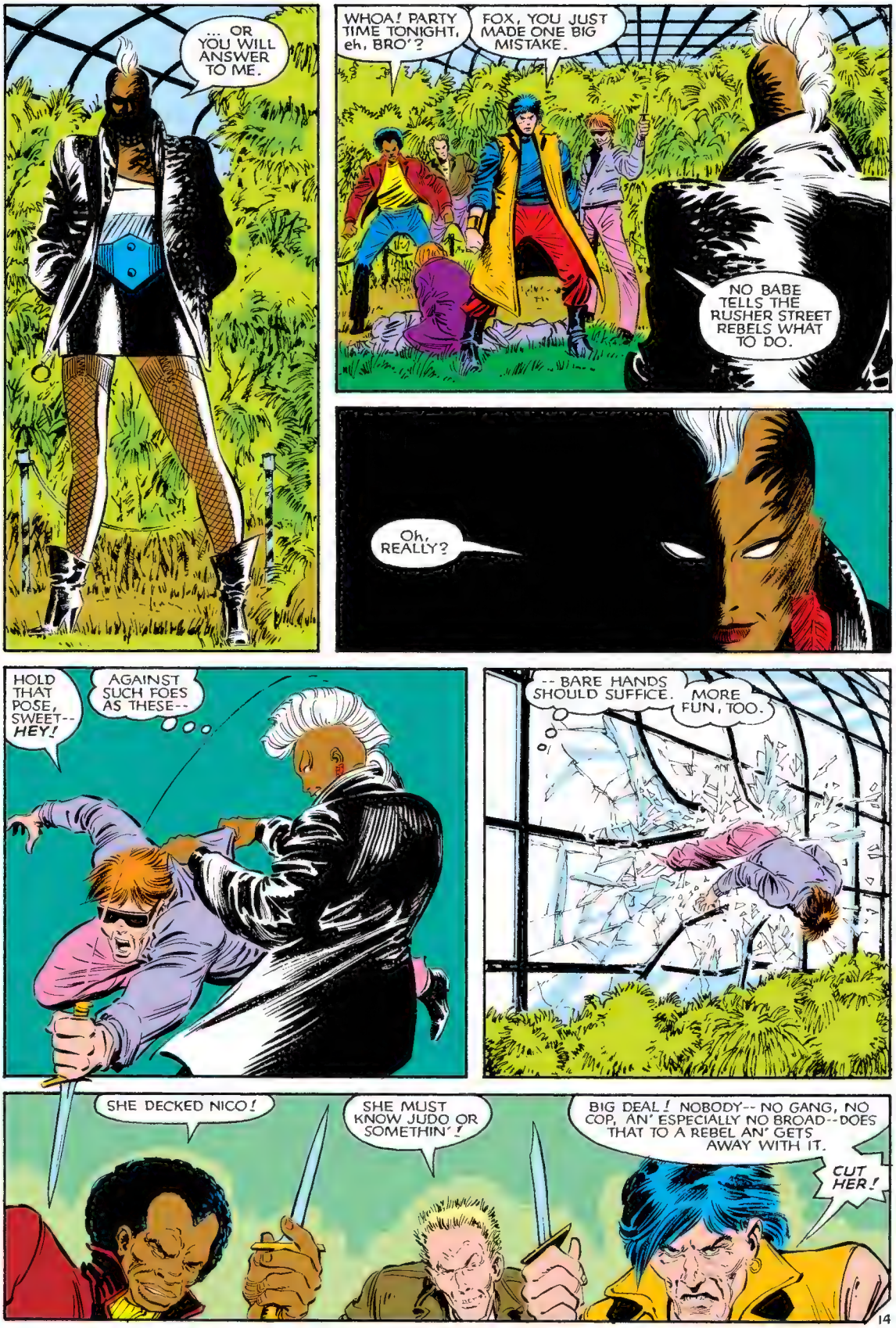

ONLY NOW-- IT NO LONGER SEEMS TO MATTER.
PART OF ME YEARNS FOR THE PEACE AND INNOCENCE OF MY YOUTH--
--BUT IF WHAT I WAS AND WHAT I HAD WAS SO RIGHT, HOW THEN COULD I TURN MY BACK ON IT, GIVE IT UP, SO COMPLETELY... SO EASILY?

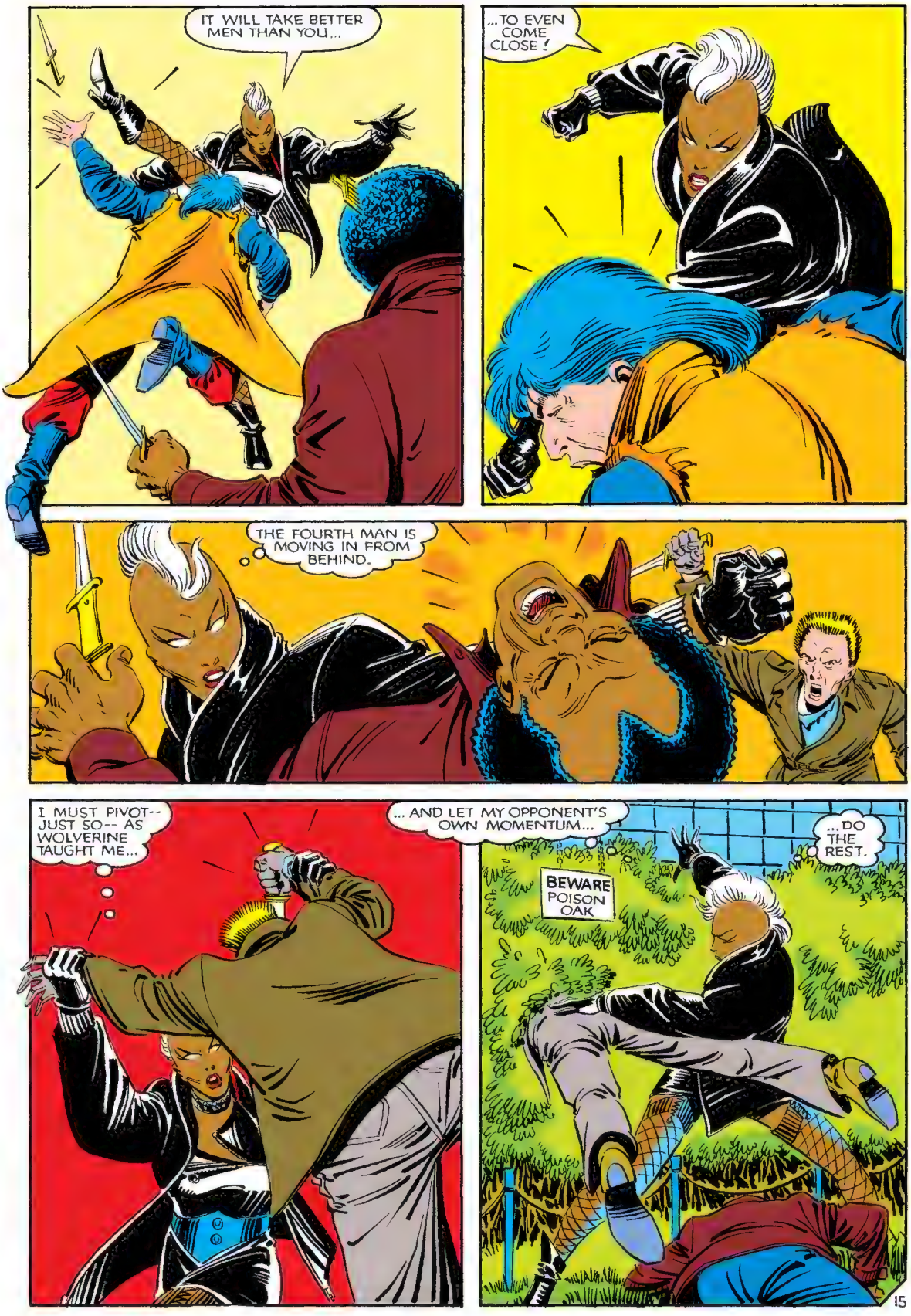

WHAT IS THAT-- YOU ARE THIRSTY??
FORGIVE ME, SMALL ONES, I DID NOT REALIZE, I WAS THINKING TOO MUCH ABOUT MYSELF.
A MOMENT'S CONCENTRATION IS ALL THE MUTANT ELEMENTAL NEEDS TO MIX AND COOL THE AIR ABOVE HER FLOWERS AND CREATE A MINIATURE RAINSTORM.

BUT THEN...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LEAVE US ALONE-- AIIOW!
I MUST GO, FRIENDS. I MAY BE NEEDED ELSEWHERE.
A VOICE-- CRYING OUT IN PAIN!

YER OL' MAN SHOULDN'T'A GOT UPPITY, LADY.
ALL WE WANTED WAS SOME BREAD.
PLEASE, I'LL GIVE YOU MONEY--!

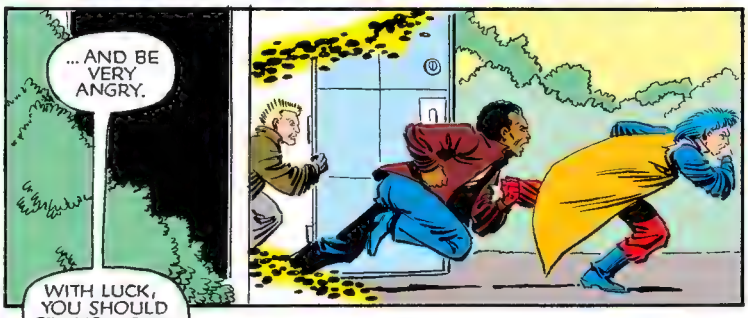
NOT GOOD ENOUGH. YOU WANT'A SAVE YOUR MAN, YOU GOTTA MAKE US REAL HAPPY...
I SUGGEST YOU LEAVE THESE PEOPLE ALONE...
HUH?! WHO--?!!
...AND BE ON YOUR WAY...

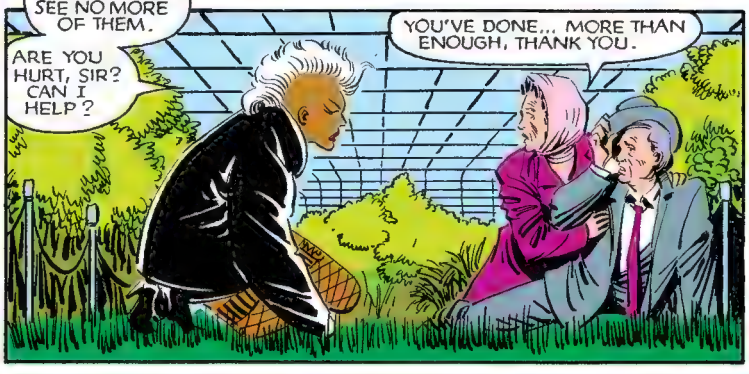

... OR YOU WILL ANSWER TO ME.
WHOA! PARTY TIME TONIGHT, eh, BRO'?
FOX, YOU JUST MADE ONE BIG MISTAKE.
NO BABE TELLS THE RUSHER STREET REBELS WHAT TO DO.
Oh, REALLY?
HOLD THAT POSE, SWEET-- HEY!
AGAINST SUCH FOES AS THESE--
-- BARE HANDS SHOULD SUFFICE.
MORE FUN, TOO.
SHE DECKED NICO!
SHE MUST KNOW JUDO OR SOMETHIN'!
BIG DEAL! NOBODY-- NO GANG, NO COP, AN' ESPECIALLY NO BROAD-- DOES THAT TO A REBEL AN' GETS AWAY WITH IT.
CUT HER!


IT WILL TAKE BETTER MEN THAN YOU...
...TO EVEN COME CLOSE!
THE FOURTH MAN IS MOVING IN FROM BEHIND.
I MUST PIVOT-- JUST SO-- AS WOLVERINE TAUGHT ME...
... AND LET MY OPPONENT'S OWN MOMENTUM...
...DO THE REST.
BEWARE POISON OAK

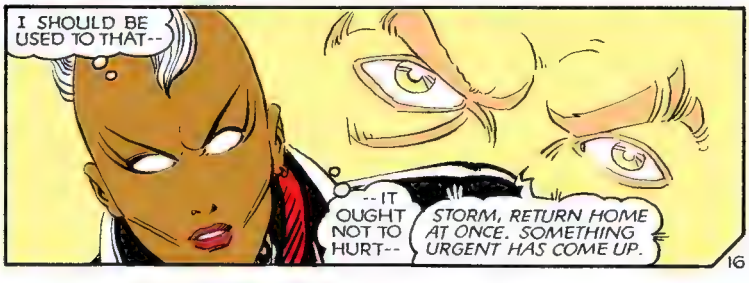
FINALLY, THE COUP DE GRACE-- A' LITTLE SOMETHING FOR THEM TO REMEMBER ME BY.
OVER THE GREENHOUSE--AND ONLY THE GREENHOUSE--THE SKY TURNS BLACK AND UGLY, LIGHTNING FLASHING BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN WHILE MASSIVE CLAPS OF THUNDER SHAKE THE EARTH. TO COMPLETE THE EFFECT, ORORO ENSHROUDS HERSELF IN St. ELMO'S FIRE...

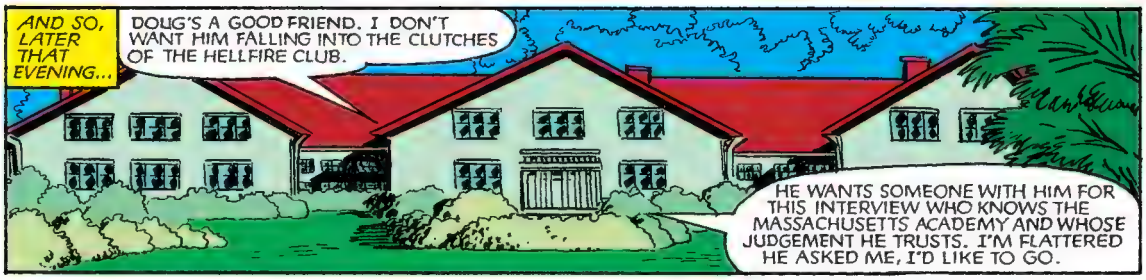
... AND THEN THE MUGGERS AS WELL.
I SUGGEST, GENTLEMEN, YOU RENOUNCE YOUR EVIL WAYS. IF YOU DO NOT, I SHALL LEARN OF IT...

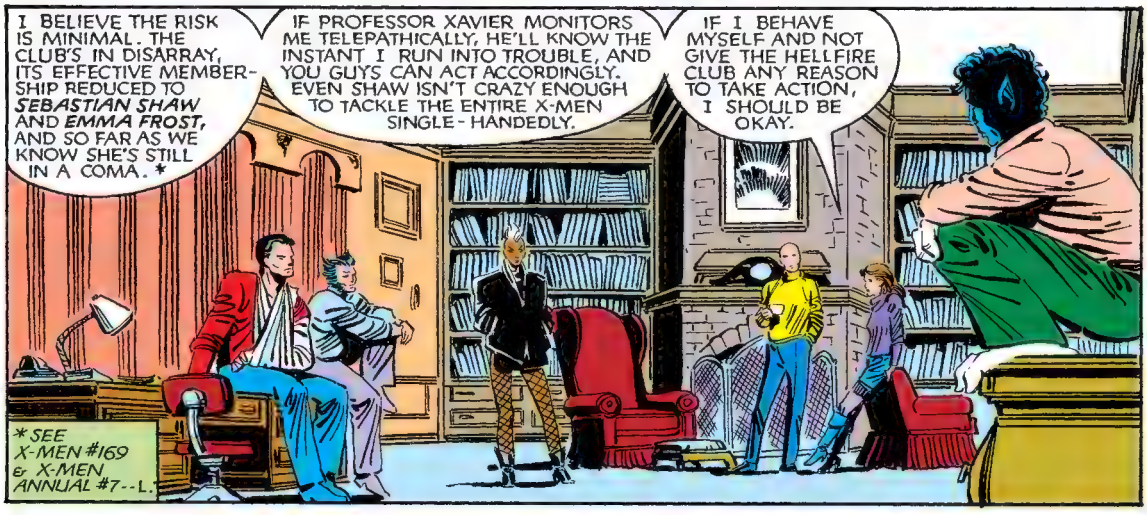

... AND BE VERY ANGRY.


WITH LUCK, YOU SHOULD SEE NO MORE OF THEM.
ARE YOU HURT, SIR? CAN I HELP?
YOU'VE DONE... MORE THAN ENOUGH, THANK YOU.

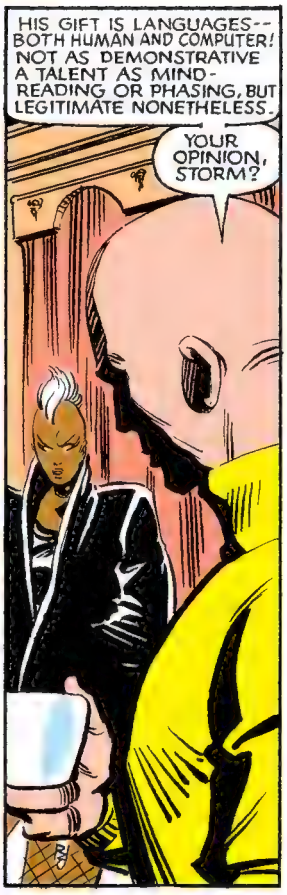
WE DON'T WANT TO BE ANY MORE TROUBLE, WE'D BEST BE GOING OURSELVES.
I SAVED THEIR LIVES-- YET THEY ARE MORE TERRIFIED OF ME THAN OF THE THUGS WHO ATTACKED THEM.


I SHOULD BE USED TO THAT--
--IT OUGHT NOT TO HURT--
STORM, RETURN HOME AT ONCE. SOMETHING URGENT HAS COME UP.


AND SO, LATER THAT EVENING...
DOUG'S A GOOD FRIEND. I DON'T WANT HIM FALLING INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB.
HE WANTS SOMEONE WITH HIM FOR THIS INTERVIEW WHO KNOWS THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY AND WHOSE JUDGEMENT HE TRUSTS. I'M FLATTERED HE ASKED ME, I'D LIKE TO GO.

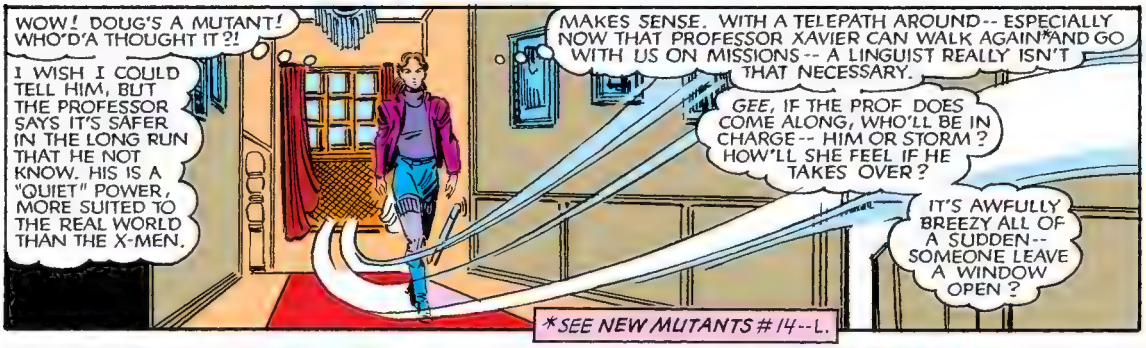

I BELIEVE THE RISK IS MINIMAL. THE CLUB'S IN DISARRAY, ITS EFFECTIVE MEMBERSHIP REDUCED TO *SEBASTIAN SHAW* AND *EMMA FROST*, AND SO FAR AS WE KNOW SHE'S STILL IN A COMA. *
IF PROFESSOR XAVIER MONITORS ME TELEPATHICALLY, HE'LL KNOW THE INSTANT I RUN INTO TROUBLE, AND YOU GUYS CAN ACT ACCORDINGLY. EVEN SHAW ISN'T CRAZY ENOUGH TO TACKLE THE ENTIRE X-MEN SINGLE-HANDEDLY.
IF I BEHAVE MYSELF AND NOT GIVE THE HELLFIRE CLUB ANY REASON TO TAKE ACTION, I SHOULD BE OKAY.
*SEE X-MEN #169 & X-MEN ANNUAL #7--L.

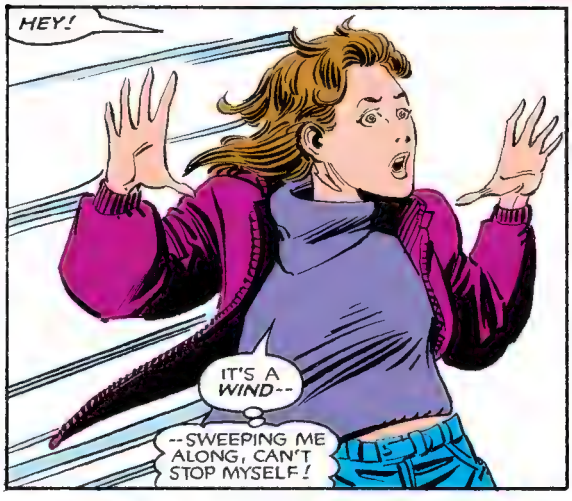
I WONDER WHY THE ACADEMY IS SO INTERESTED IN YOUNG DOUGLAS? COULD THEY KNOW HE'S A MUTANT?
WHAT?!?


HIS GIFT IS LANGUAGES--BOTH HUMAN AND COMPUTER! NOT AS DEMONSTRATIVE A TALENT AS MIND-READING OR PHASING, BUT LEGITIMATE NONETHELESS.
YOUR OPINION, STORM?

I DO NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF KITTY WALKING INTO THE ENEMY CAMP BY HERSELF, BUT HER PLAN COVERS EVERY CONTINGENCY.
WITH RESERVATIONS, I APPROVE.

AS DO I.


WOW! DOUG'S A MUTANT! WHO'D'A THOUGHT IT?!
I WISH I COULD TELL HIM, BUT THE PROFESSOR SAYS IT'S SAFER IN THE LONG RUN THAT HE NOT KNOW. HIS IS A "QUIET" POWER, MORE SUITED TO THE REAL WORLD THAN THE X-MEN.
MAKES SENSE. WITH A TELEPATH AROUND-- ESPECIALLY NOW THAT PROFESSOR XAVIER CAN WALK AGAIN*AND GO WITH US ON MISSIONS-- A LINGUIST REALLY ISN'T THAT NECESSARY.
GEE, IF THE PROF DOES COME ALONG, WHO'LL BE IN CHARGE-- HIM OR STORM? HOW'LL SHE FEEL IF HE TAKES OVER?
IT'S AWFULLY BREEZY ALL OF A SUDDEN-- SOMEONE LEAVE A WINDOW OPEN?
*SEE NEW MUTANTS #14--L.

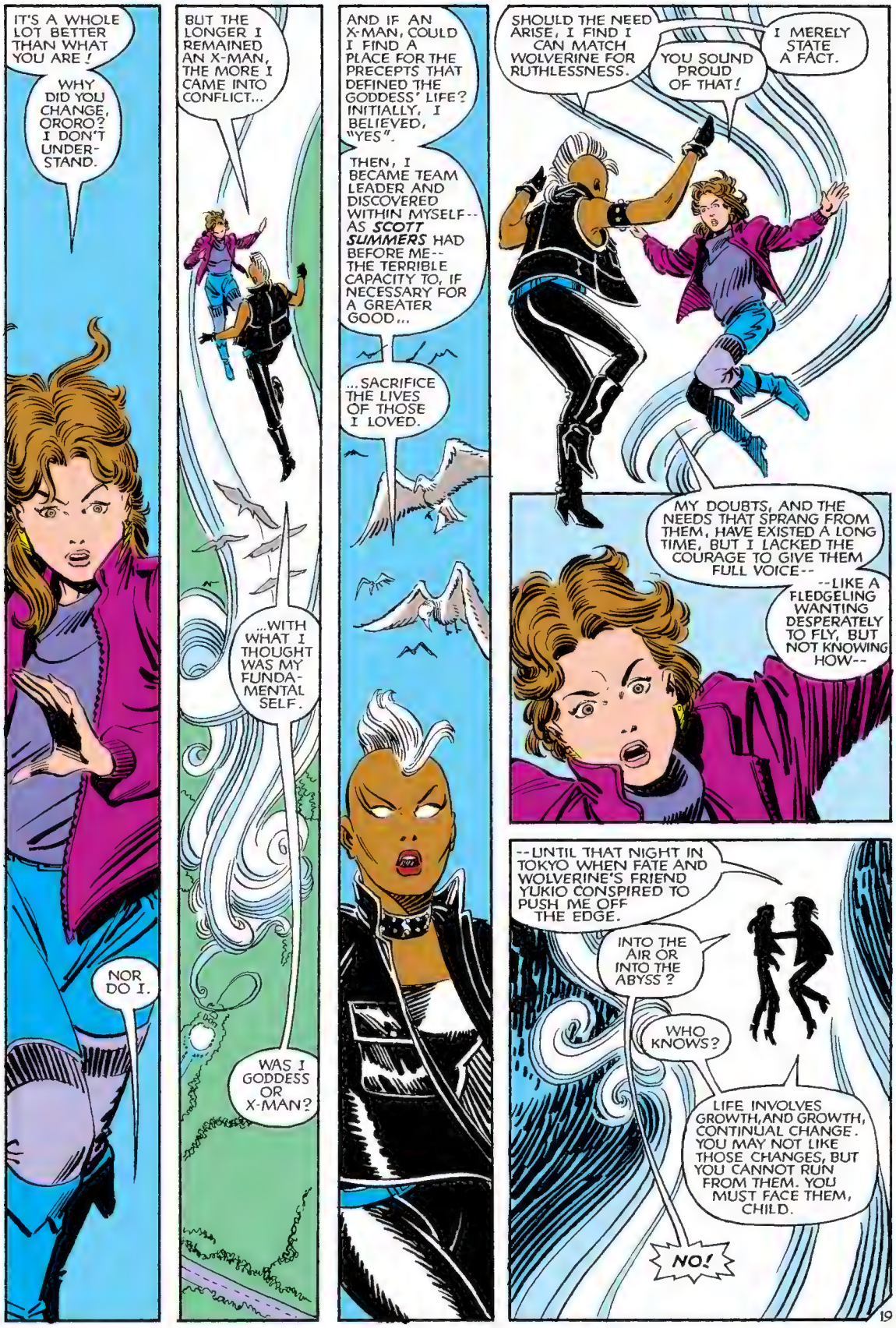

HEY!
IT'S A WIND--
--SWEEPING ME ALONG, CAN'T STOP MYSELF!

ORORO-- CUT IT OUT!
IT IS PAST TIME, KITTEN, WE HAD A TALK--

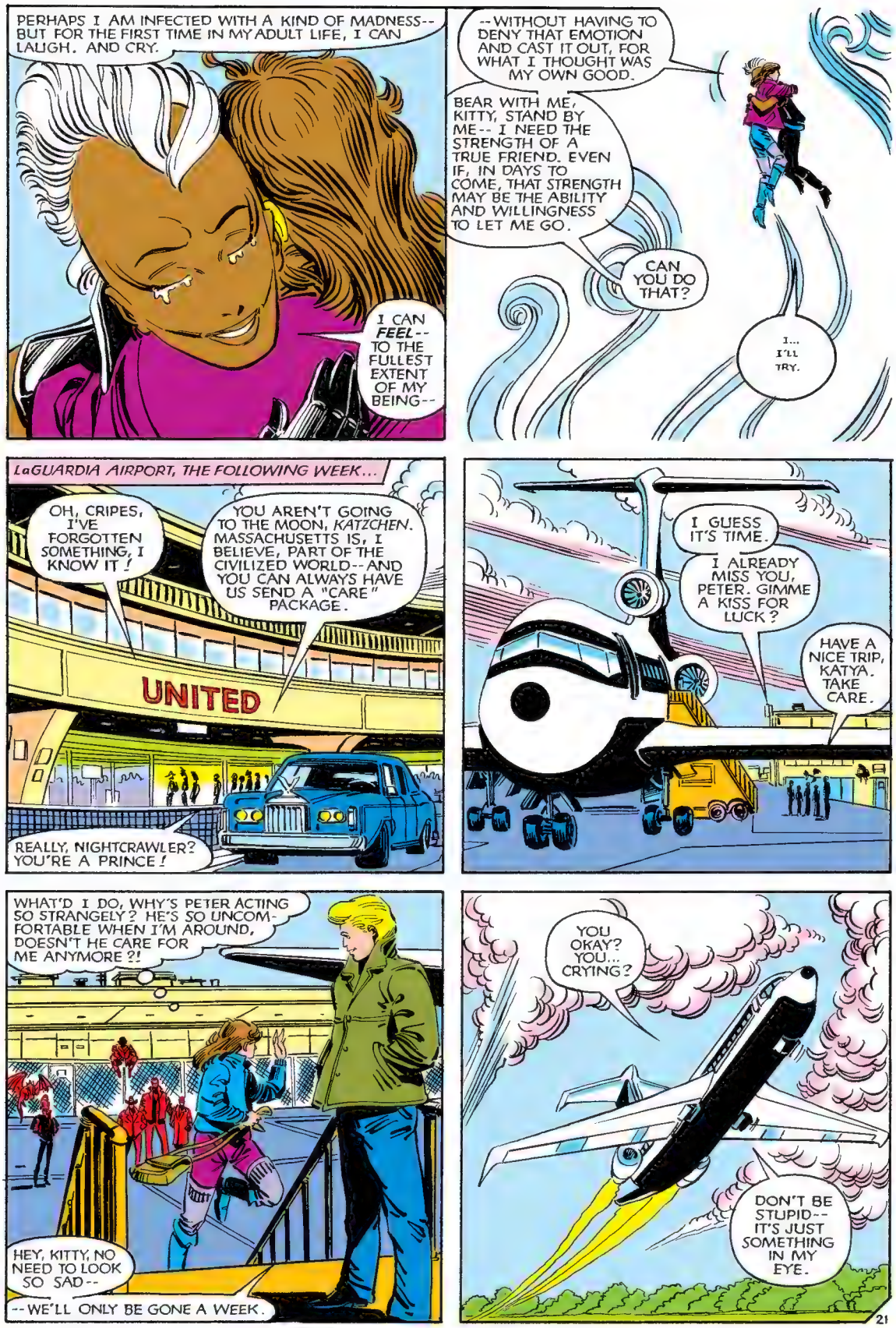
-- FAR FROM PRYING EYES OR EARS-- OR MINDS.
HOW HIGH UP ARE WE, IT MUST BE MILES!!
YOU COULD HAVE JUST ASKED, THERE WAS NO NEED TO BE SUCH A SHOW-OFF!

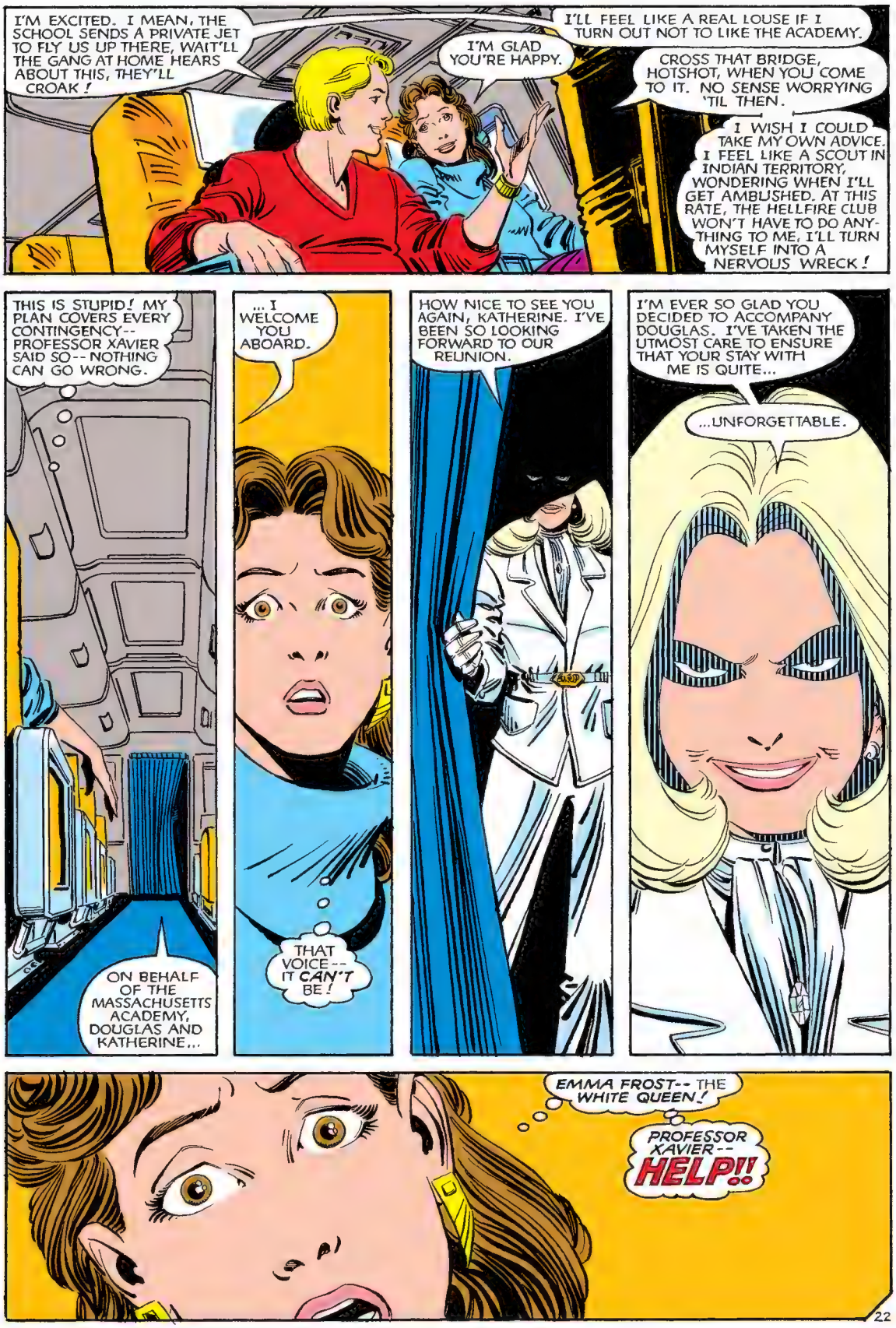
YOU SCARED ME HALF-TO-DEATH!
THE STORM YOU PREFER WOULD NOT HAVE DONE SO, CORRECT?
THAT'S RIGHT!

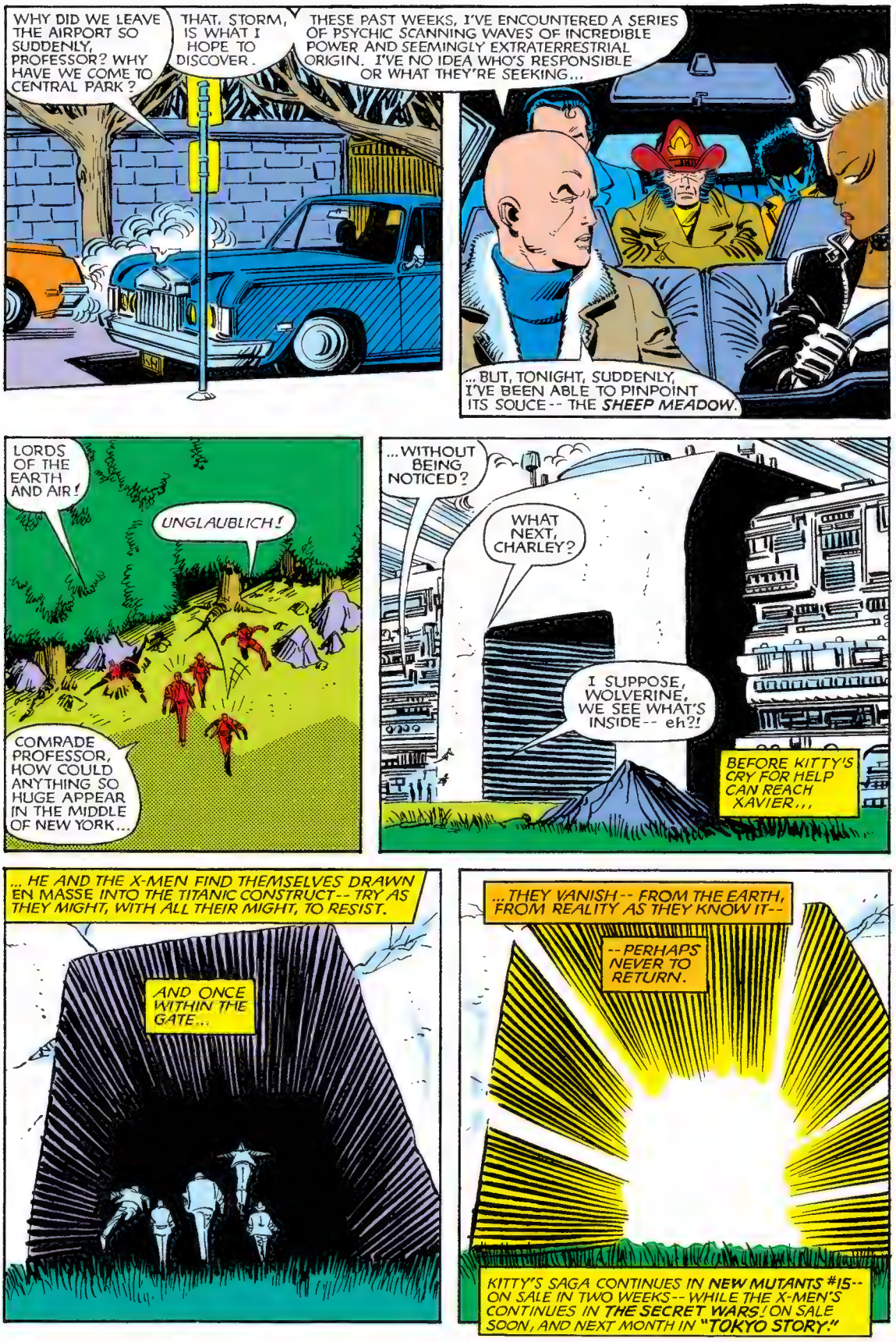
SO, FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND...
... I MUST FORCE MYSELF TO BE SOMEONE-- SOMETHING-- I AM NOT?!

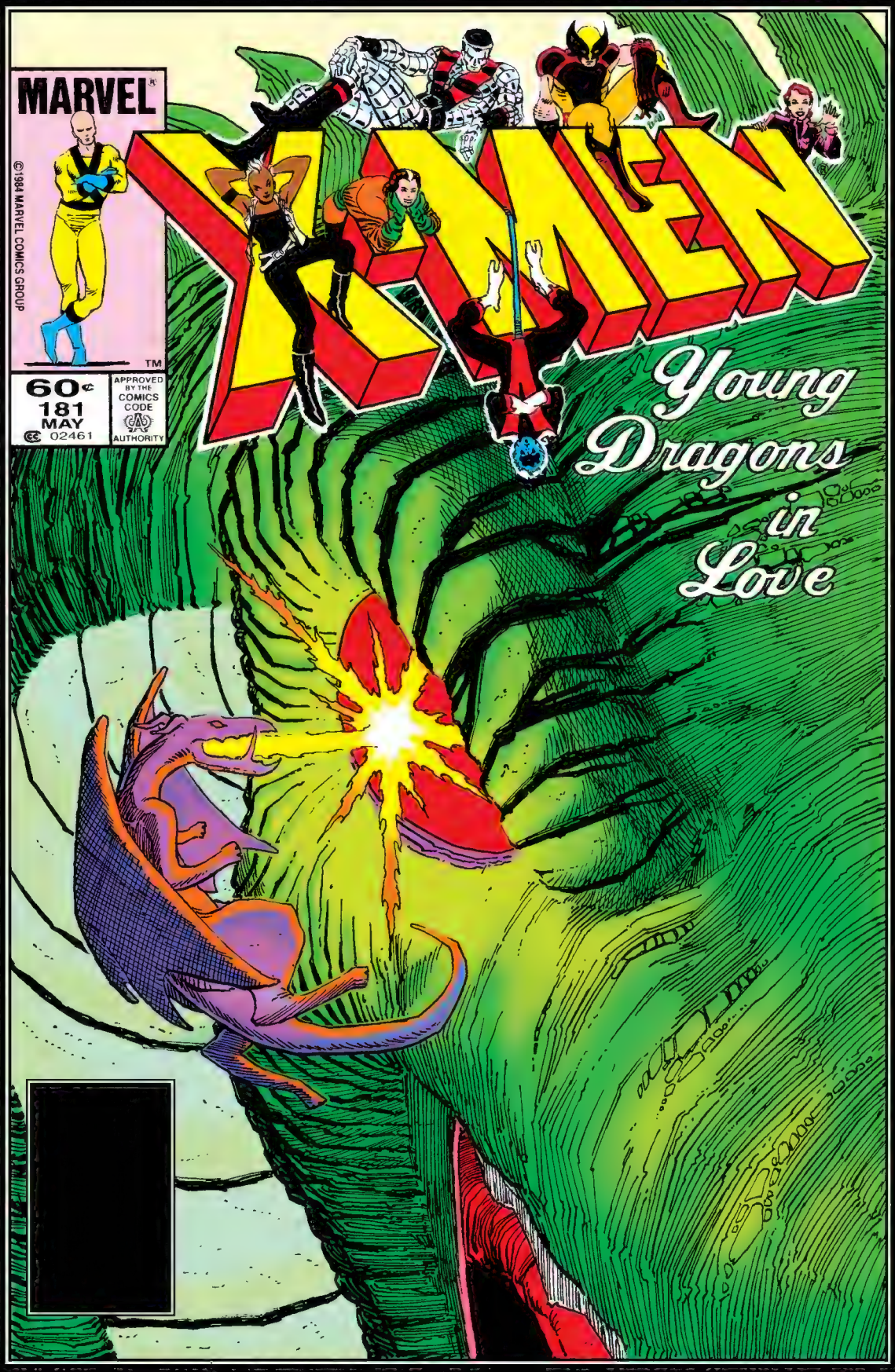

IT'S A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN WHAT YOU ARE!
WHY DID YOU CHANGE, ORORO? I DON'T UNDER-STAND.
NOR DO I.
BUT THE LONGER I REMAINED AN X-MAN, THE MORE I CAME INTO CONFLICT...
...WITH WHAT I THOUGHT WAS MY FUNDA-MENTAL SELF.
WAS I GODDESS OR X-MAN?
AND IF AN X-MAN, COULD I FIND A PLACE FOR THE PRECEPTS THAT DEFINED THE GODDESS' LIFE? INITIALLY, I BELIEVED, "YES".
THEN, I BECAME TEAM LEADER AND DISCOVERED WITHIN MYSELF--AS SCOTT SUMMERS HAD BEFORE ME--THE TERRIBLE CAPACITY TO, IF NECESSARY FOR A GREATER GOOD...
...SACRIFICE THE LIVES OF THOSE I LOVED.
SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, I FIND I CAN MATCH WOLVERINE FOR RUTHLESSNESS.
YOU SOUND PROUD OF THAT!
I MERELY STATE A FACT.
MY DOUBTS, AND THE NEEDS THAT SPRANG FROM THEM, HAVE EXISTED A LONG TIME, BUT I LACKED THE COURAGE TO GIVE THEM FULL VOICE--
--LIKE A FLEDGELING WANTING DESPERATELY TO FLY, BUT NOT KNOWING HOW--
--UNTIL THAT NIGHT IN TOKYO WHEN FATE AND WOLVERINE'S FRIEND YUKIO CONSPIRED TO PUSH ME OFF THE EDGE.
INTO THE AIR OR INTO THE ABYSS?
WHO KNOWS?
LIFE INVOLVES GROWTH, AND GROWTH, CONTINUAL CHANGE. YOU MAY NOT LIKE THOSE CHANGES, BUT YOU CANNOT RUN FROM THEM. YOU MUST FACE THEM, CHILD.
NO!

SOME THINGS SHOULDN'T CHANGE! THEY SHOULD BE CONSTANT!
IT WAS BAD ENOUGH MY PARENTS COULDN'T KEEP THE PROMISES THEY MADE TO EACH OTHER--
--BUT I THOUGHT I COULD COUNT ON YOU!
BY WHAT RIGHT?!
KITTY, I AM YOUR FRIEND--I PRAY I SHALL ALWAYS REMAIN SO--BUT THAT IS ALL. I AM NOT--MUST NOT BE--YOUR MOTHER.
I USED TO BELIEVE I COULD PLAY THAT ROLE--TO FILL A VOID IN EACH OUR LIVES--BUT THAT WAS A MISTAKE.
DON'T YOU LOVE ME?
WITH ALL MY HEART.
BUT YOU HAVE OTHER DEMANDS ON YOUR HEART, YOUR LOVE, DO YOU NOT? YOU TAKE SUCH FREEDOM FOR YOURSELF, WHY DO YOU DENY IT TO ME?
WE EACH HAVE OUR LIVES TO LIVE, OUR OWN ROADS TO WALK TO OUR INDIVIDUAL DESTINIES. FRIENDS--AND LOVERS--MAY WALK BY OUR SIDE...
...BUT ULTIMATELY, THE JOURNEY IS MADE ALONE.
I AM LEARNING THINGS ABOUT MYSELF I DO NOT LIKE...
... BUT I MUST KEEP LEARNING, STRIVING TO FIND MY TRUE SELF--MY PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS. I MUST KNOW WHO I AM. I MUST LIVE MY LIFE AS I SEE FIT.
IF YOU LOVE ME, KITTEN, YOU MUST LET ME DO SO.
I'M SCARED, ORORO.
WILL IT HAPPEN TO ME, TOO, LIKE THIS? IF I FALL IN LOVE, WILL IT ONLY BE FOR A WHILE? OR, WORSE, WILL THE PERSON I LOVE STOP LOVING ME--?
I CAN'T BEAR SEEING YOU DESTROY YOURSELF.


PERHAPS I AM INFECTED WITH A KIND OF MADNESS-- BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY ADULT LIFE, I CAN LAUGH. AND CRY.
I CAN *FEEL*-- TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF MY BEING--
--WITHOUT HAVING TO DENY THAT EMOTION AND CAST IT OUT, FOR WHAT I THOUGHT WAS MY OWN GOOD.
BEAR WITH ME, KITTY, STAND BY ME-- I NEED THE STRENGTH OF A TRUE FRIEND. EVEN IF, IN DAYS TO COME, THAT STRENGTH MAY BE THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO LET ME GO.
CAN YOU DO THAT?
I... I'LL TRY.
LaGUARDIA AIRPORT, THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
OH, CRIPES, I'VE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING, I KNOW IT!
YOU AREN'T GOING TO THE MOON, *KATZCHEN*. MASSACHUSETTS IS, I BELIEVE, PART OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD--AND YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE US SEND A "CARE" PACKAGE.
UNITED
REALLY, NIGHTCRAWLER? YOU'RE A PRINCE!
I GUESS IT'S TIME.
I ALREADY MISS YOU, PETER. GIMME A KISS FOR LUCK?
HAVE A NICE TRIP, KATYA. TAKE CARE.
WHAT'D I DO, WHY'S PETER ACTING SO STRANGELY? HE'S SO UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN I'M AROUND, DOESN'T HE CARE FOR ME ANYMORE?!
HEY, KITTY, NO NEED TO LOOK SO SAD--
--WE'LL ONLY BE GONE A WEEK.
YOU OKAY? YOU... CRYING?
DON'T BE STUPID-- IT'S JUST SOMETHING IN MY EYE.


I'M EXCITED. I MEAN, THE SCHOOL SENDS A PRIVATE JET TO FLY US UP THERE, WAIT'LL THE GANG AT HOME HEARS ABOUT THIS, THEY'LL CROAK!
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HAPPY.
I'LL FEEL LIKE A REAL LOUSE IF I TURN OUT NOT TO LIKE THE ACADEMY.
CROSS THAT BRIDGE, HOTSHOT, WHEN YOU COME TO IT. NO SENSE WORRYING 'TIL THEN.
I WISH I COULD TAKE MY OWN ADVICE. I FEEL LIKE A SCOUT IN INDIAN TERRITORY, WONDERING WHEN I'LL GET AMBUSHED. AT THIS RATE, THE HELLFIRE CLUB WON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING TO ME, I'LL TURN MYSELF INTO A NERVOUS WRECK!
THIS IS STUPID! MY PLAN COVERS EVERY CONTINGENCY-- PROFESSOR XAVIER SAID SO-- NOTHING CAN GO WRONG.
ON BEHALF OF THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY, DOUGLAS AND KATHERINE...
... I WELCOME YOU ABOARD.
THAT VOICE-- IT CAN'T BE!
HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, KATHERINE. I'VE BEEN SO LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR REUNION.
I'M EVER SO GLAD YOU DECIDED TO ACCOMPANY DOUGLAS. I'VE TAKEN THE UTMOST CARE TO ENSURE THAT YOUR STAY WITH ME IS QUITE...
...UNFORGETTABLE.
EMMA FROST-- THE WHITE QUEEN!
PROFESSOR XAVIER-- HELP!!


WHY DID WE LEAVE THE AIRPORT SO SUDDENLY, PROFESSOR? WHY HAVE WE COME TO CENTRAL PARK?
THAT, STORM, IS WHAT I HOPE TO DISCOVER.
THESE PAST WEEKS, I'VE ENCOUNTERED A SERIES OF PSYCHIC SCANNING WAVES OF INCREDIBLE POWER AND SEEMINGLY EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORIGIN. I'VE NO IDEA WHO'S RESPONSIBLE OR WHAT THEY'RE SEEKING...
...BUT, TONIGHT, SUDDENLY, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PINPOINT ITS SOUCE -- THE SHEEP MEADOW.
LORDS OF THE EARTH AND AIR!
UNGLAUBLICH!
COMRADE PROFESSOR, HOW COULD ANYTHING SO HUGE APPEAR IN THE MIDDLE OF NEW YORK...
...WITHOUT BEING NOTICED?
WHAT NEXT, CHARLEY?
I SUPPOSE, WOLVERINE, WE SEE WHAT'S INSIDE -- eh?!
BEFORE KITTY'S CRY FOR HELP CAN REACH XAVIER...
...HE AND THE X-MEN FIND THEMSELVES DRAWN EN MASSE INTO THE TITANIC CONSTRUCT -- TRY AS THEY MIGHT, WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT, TO RESIST.
AND ONCE WITHIN THE GATE...
...THEY VANISH -- FROM THE EARTH, FROM REALITY AS THEY KNOW IT --
-- PERHAPS NEVER TO RETURN.
KITTY'S SAGA CONTINUES IN NEW MUTANTS #15 -- ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS -- WHILE THE X-MEN'S CONTINUES IN THE SECRET WARS! ON SALE SOON, AND NEXT MONTH IN "TOKYO STORY."


MARVEL
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X-MEN
Young Dragons in Love

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE UNCANNY X-MEN!™
<LOOK! UP IN THE SKY!>*
<IT'S A BIRD!>
<IT'S A PLANE!>
<IT'S-->
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE -- LOUISE.

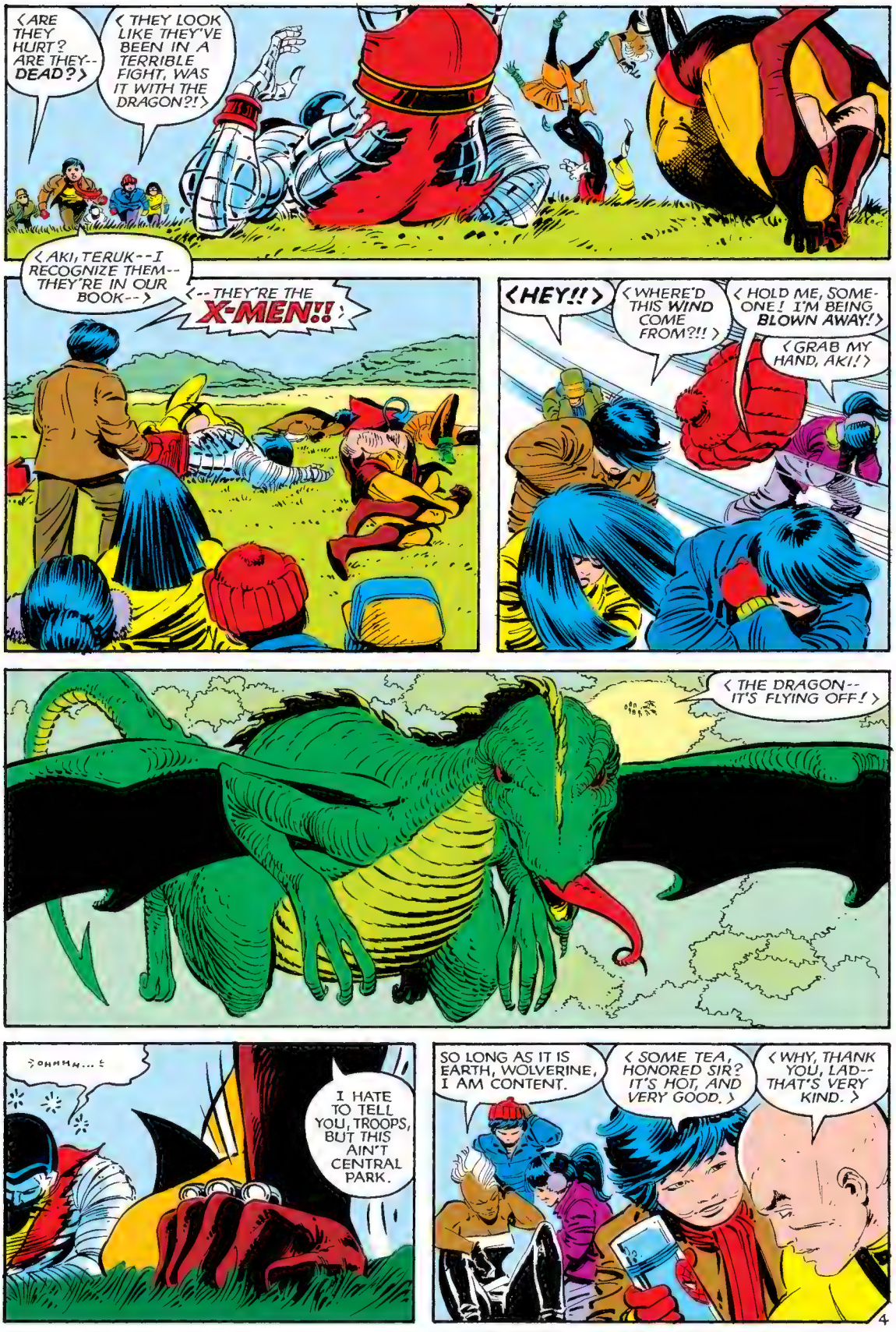
TOKYO STORY

A **STAN LEE** PRESENTATION STARRING THE UNCANNY **X-MEN**

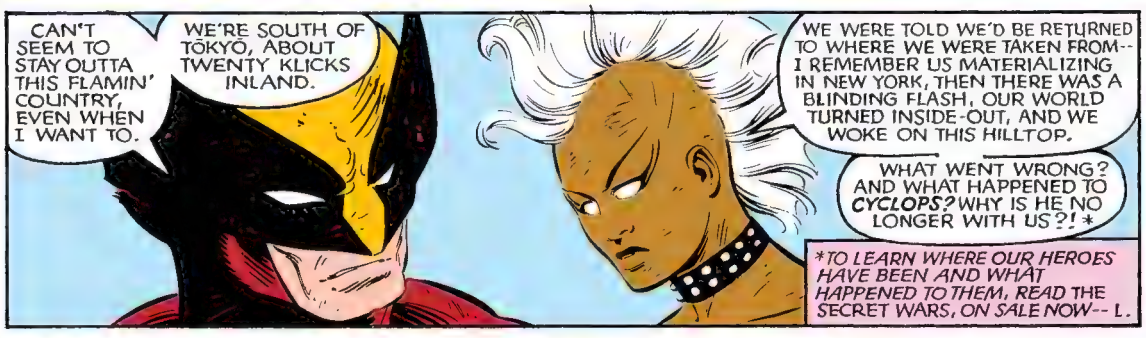
CHRIS CLAREMONT *writer* — JOHN ROMITA Jr. & DAN GREEN *artists*

TOM ORZECHOWSKI *letterer* — GLYNIS WEIN *colorist* — LOUISE JONES *editor* — JIM SHOOTER *editor-in-chief*

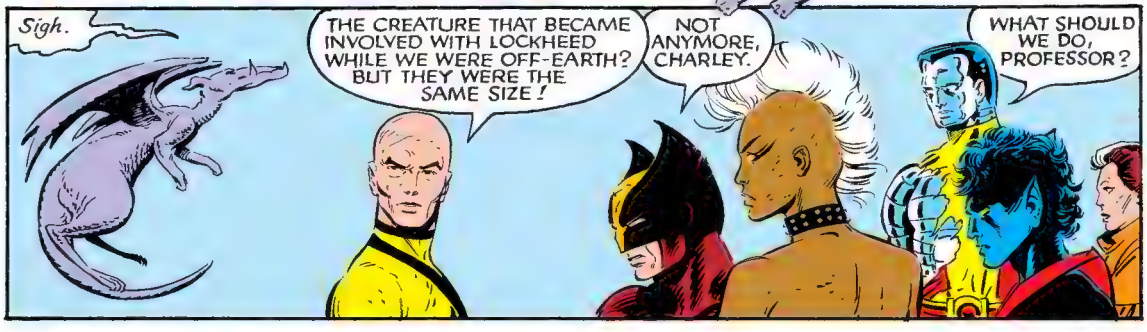
JIRO, LOOK IT UP, QUICK! WHICH MONSTER IS IT?!
GIVE ME A CHANCE, WILL YOU, AKIRO? I'M GOING AS FAST AS I CAN!
GOJIRA...
... SPACE CRUISER YAMATO...
... ASTRO BOY...
... RED RONIN...
...HULK...
THE DRAGON ISN'T IN OUR MONSTER BOOK! IT MUST BE A NEW ONE!
WE'VE DISCOVERED A BRAND-NEW MONSTER! WAIT'LL WE TELL THE KIDS AT SCHOOL, THEY'LL BE SO JEALOUS!
2

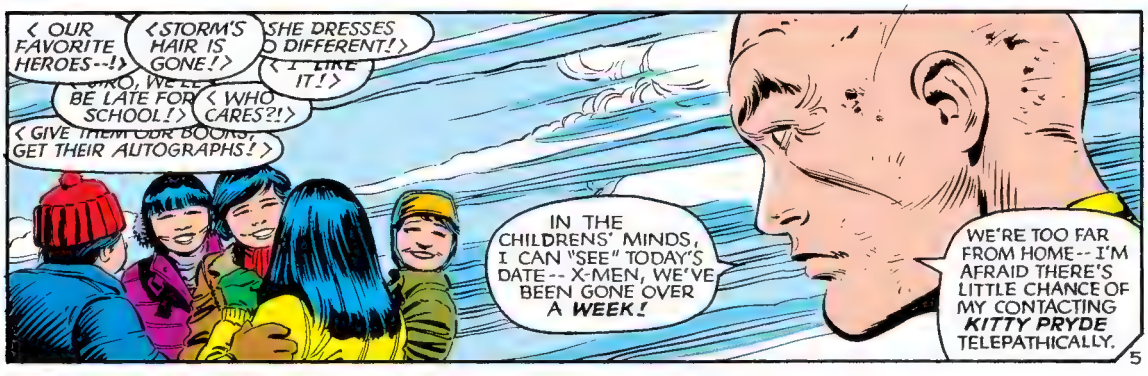

〈ARE THEY HURT? ARE THEY--DEAD?〉
〈THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'VE BEEN IN A TERRIBLE FIGHT, WAS IT WITH THE DRAGON?!〉
〈AKI, TERUK--I RECOGNIZE THEM--THEY'RE IN OUR BOOK--〉
〈--THEY'RE THE X-MEN!!〉
〈HEY!!〉
〈WHERE'D THIS WIND COME FROM?!!〉
〈HOLD ME, SOMEONE! I'M BEING BLOWN AWAY!〉
〈GRAB MY HAND, AKI!〉
〈THE DRAGON--IT'S FLYING OFF!〉
〉OHMMM...〈
I HATE TO TELL YOU, TROOPS, BUT THIS AIN'T CENTRAL PARK.
SO LONG AS IT IS EARTH, WOLVERINE, I AM CONTENT.
〈SOME TEA, HONORED SIR? IT'S HOT, AND VERY GOOD.〉
〈WHY, THANK YOU, LAD--THAT'S VERY KIND.〉

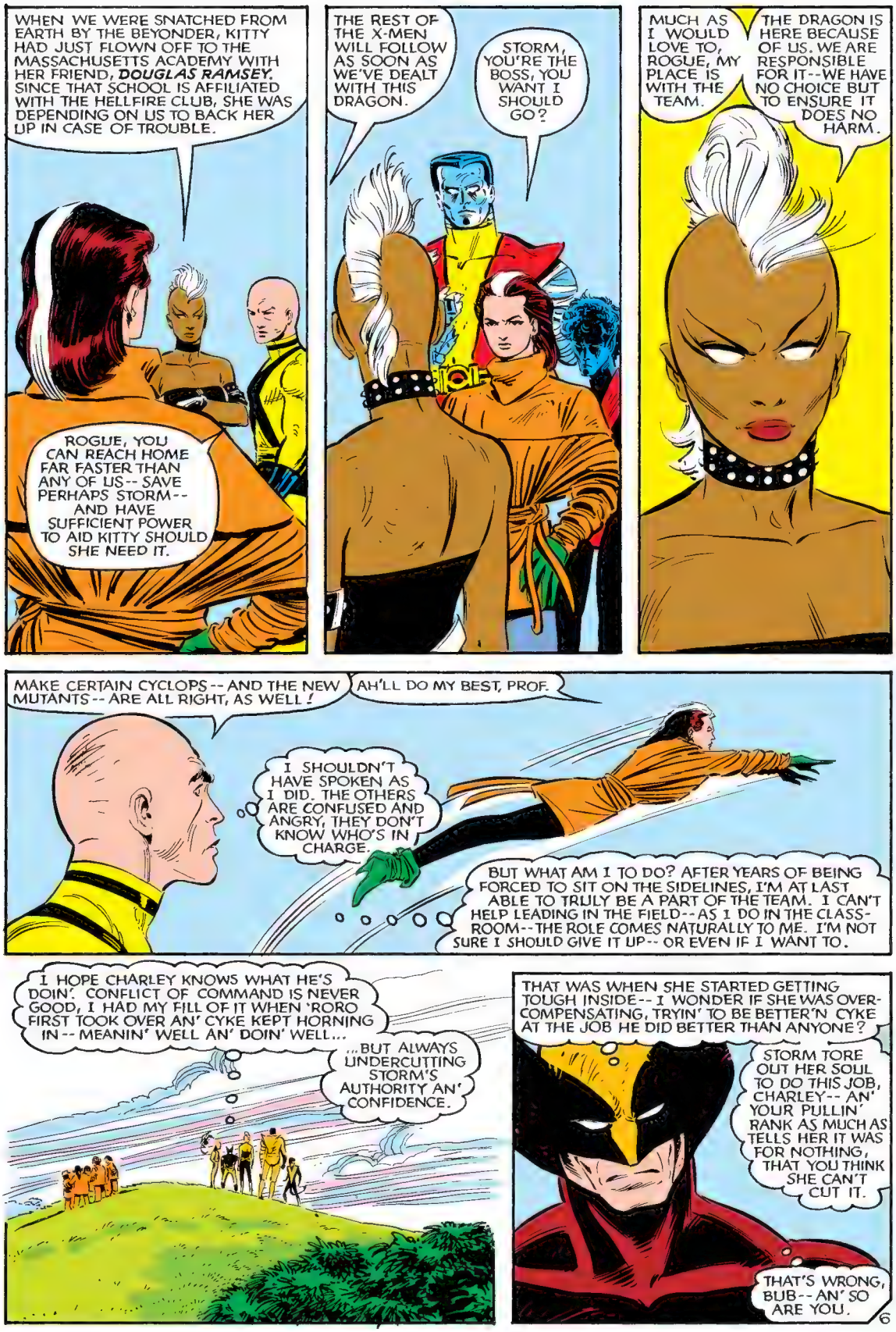
EVERY-ONE HERE?
IT SEEMS SO, ROGUE-- BUT WHERE IS HERE?
LOOK AT THE KIDS, ELF. LISTEN TO 'EM TALK-- IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS.
< WHERE PRECISELY ARE WE IN JAPAN, YOUNG FELLA? >
<KANAGAWA PREFECTURE, WOLVERINE-SAN, ON THE MAIN ISLAND OF HONSHU. THE NEAREST TOWN IS YAMATO.>


CAN'T SEEM TO STAY OUTTA THIS FLAMIN' COUNTRY, EVEN WHEN I WANT TO.
WE'RE SOUTH OF TOKYO, ABOUT TWENTY KLICKS INLAND.
WE WERE TOLD WE'D BE RETURNED TO WHERE WE WERE TAKEN FROM-- I REMEMBER US MATERIALIZING IN NEW YORK, THEN THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH, OUR WORLD TURNED INSIDE-OUT, AND WE WOKE ON THIS HILLTOP.
WHAT WENT WRONG? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO CYCLOPS? WHY IS HE NO LONGER WITH US?! *
*TO LEARN WHERE OUR HEROES HAVE BEEN AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, READ THE SECRET WARS, ON SALE NOW-- L.

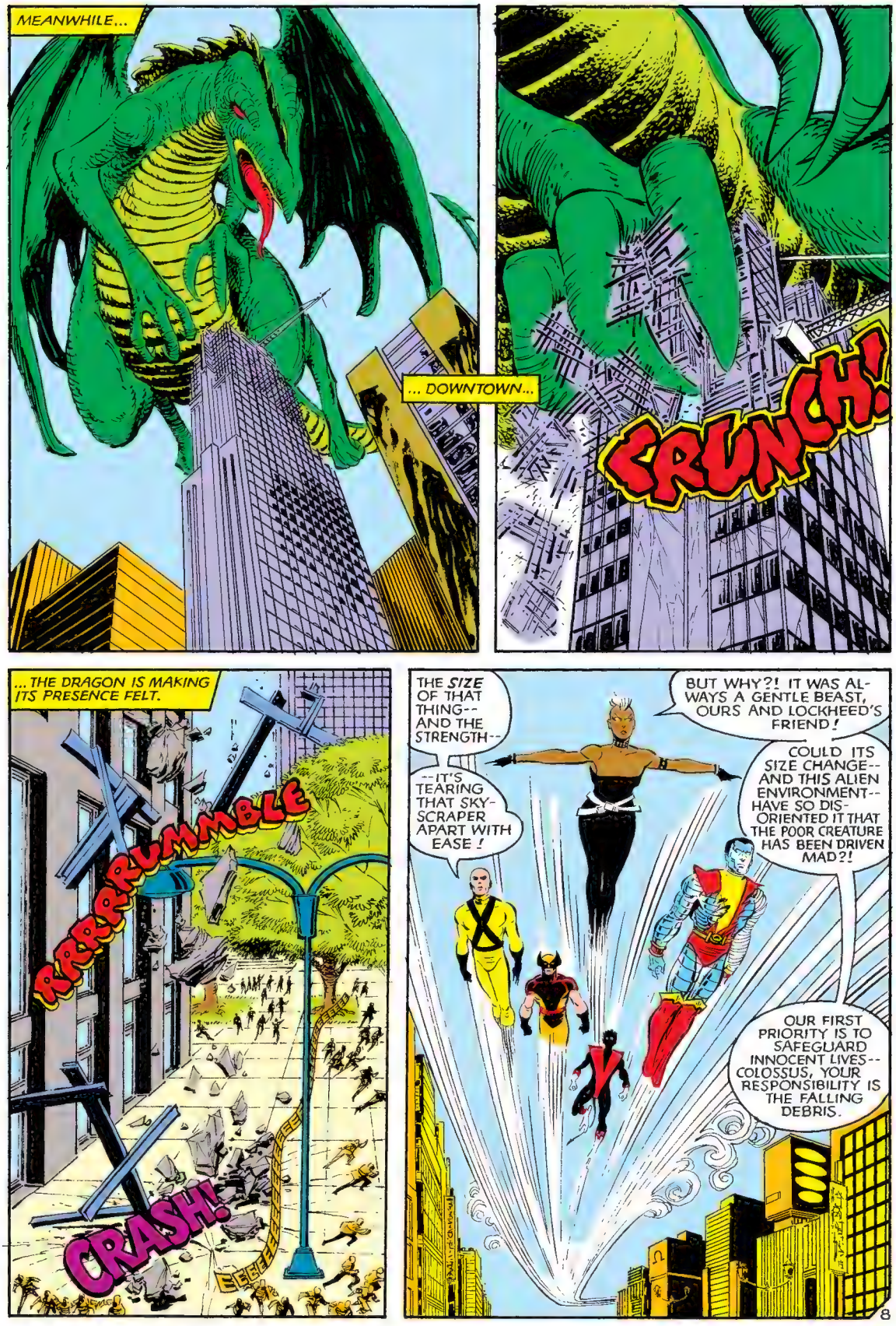
< EXCUSE ME, BUT IS THAT LITTLE DRAGON RELATED TO THE GIANT ONE THAT JUST FLEW AWAY? >
Humph!
< DRAGON?! WHAT DRAGON?!? >

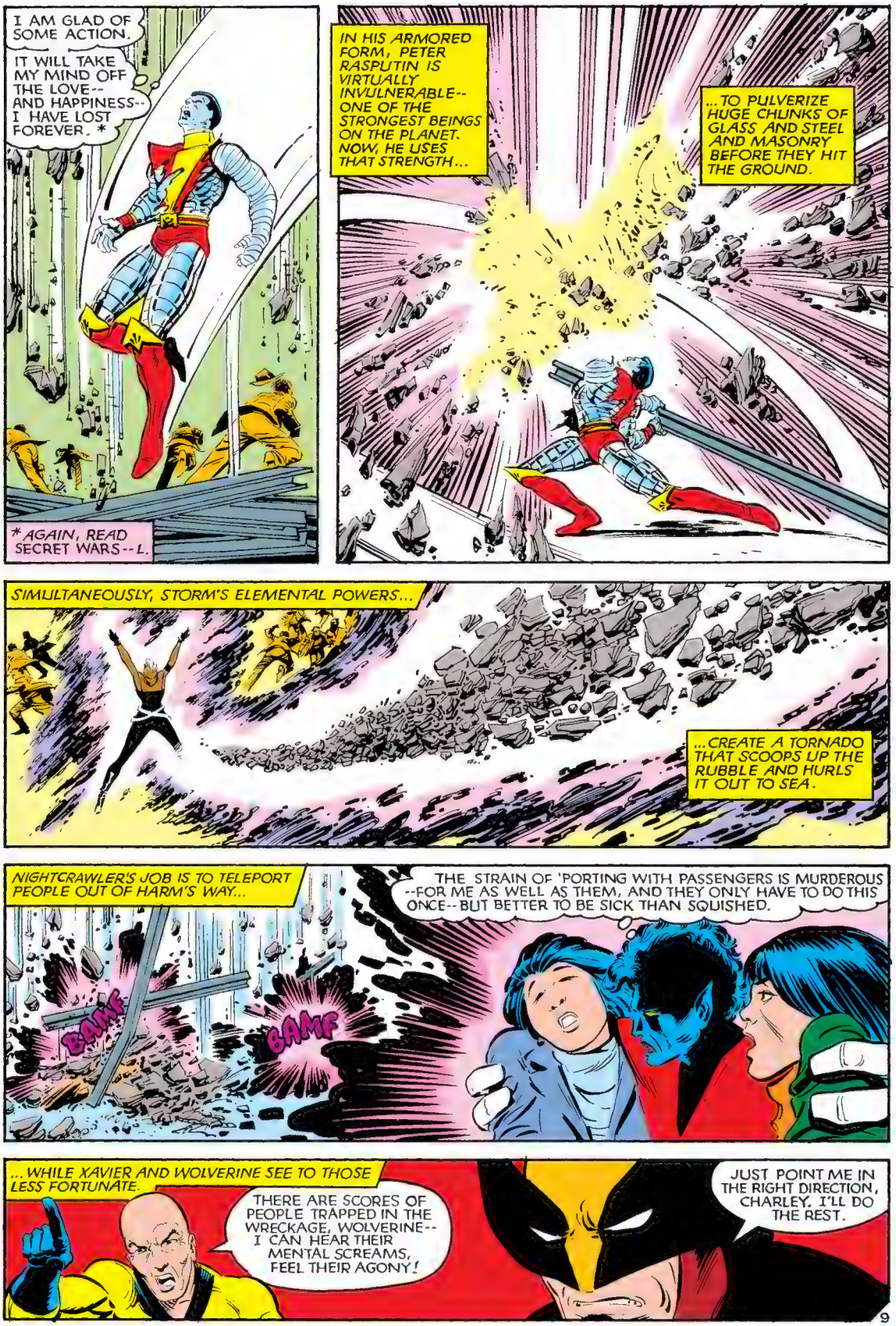

Sigh.
THE CREATURE THAT BECAME INVOLVED WITH LOCKHEED WHILE WE WERE OFF-EARTH? BUT THEY WERE THE SAME SIZE!
NOT ANYMORE, CHARLEY.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO, PROFESSOR?

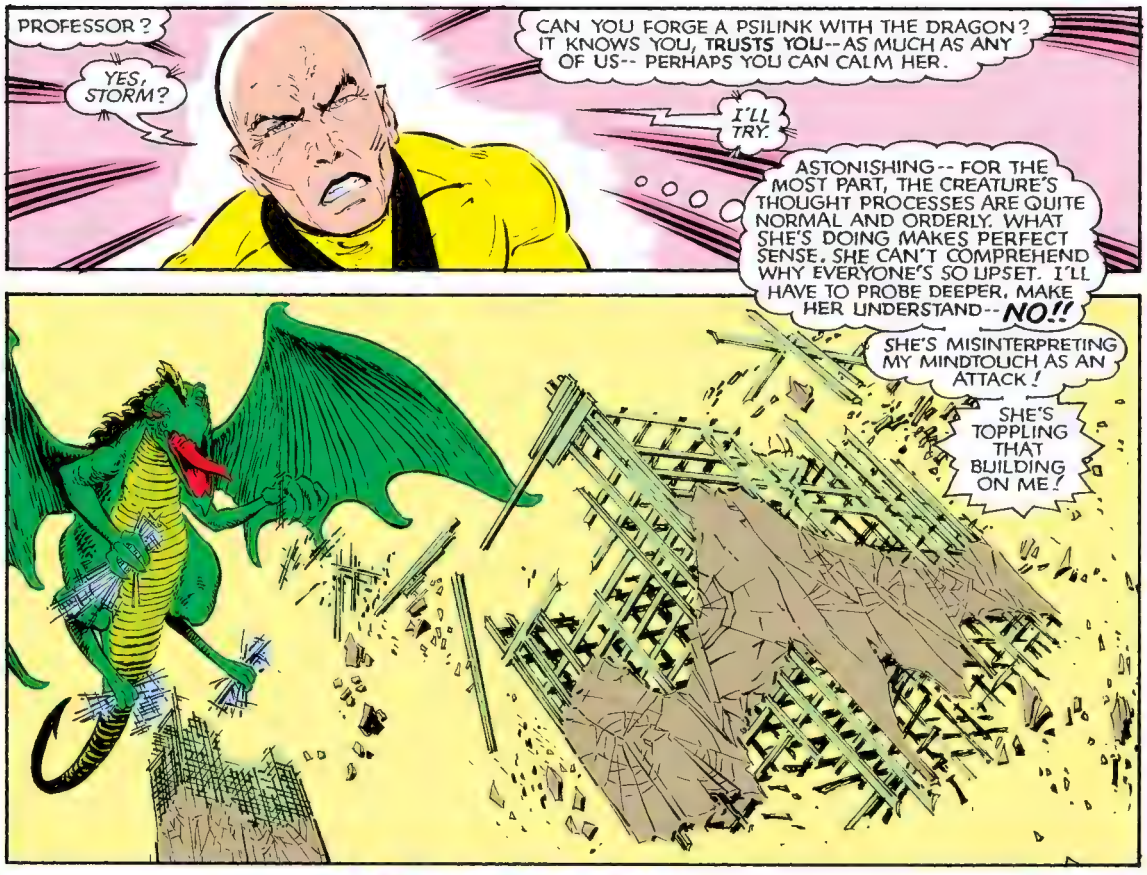

< OUR FAVORITE HEROES--! >
<STORM'S HAIR IS GONE!>
SHE DRESSES DIFFERENT!>
< I LIKE IT! >
BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!>
< WHO CARES?! >
< GIVE THEM OUR BOOKS, GET THEIR AUTOGRAPHS! >
IN THE CHILDRENS' MINDS, I CAN "SEE" TODAY'S DATE-- X-MEN, WE'VE BEEN GONE OVER A WEEK!
WE'RE TOO FAR FROM HOME-- I'M AFRAID THERE'S LITTLE CHANCE OF MY CONTACTING KITTY PRYDE TELEPATHICALLY.

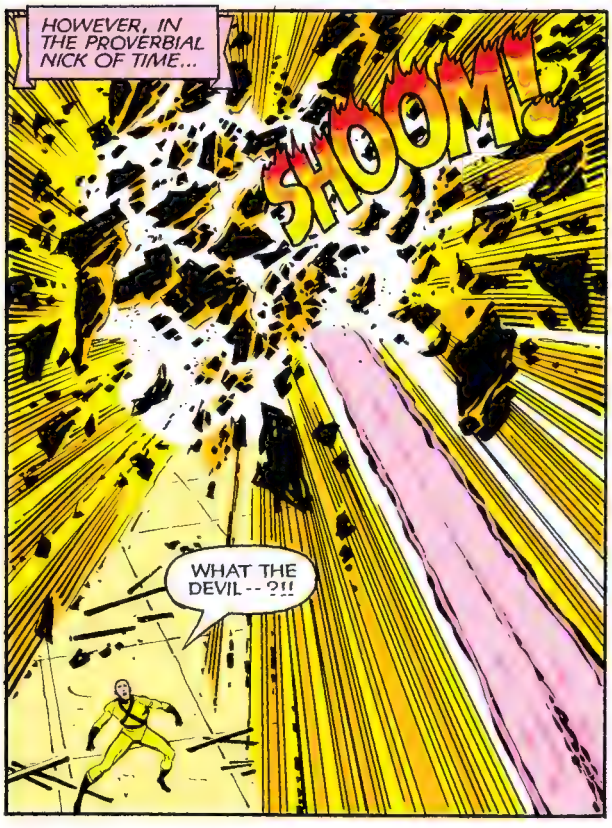

WHEN WE WERE SNATCHED FROM EARTH BY THE BEYONDER, KITTY HAD JUST FLOWN OFF TO THE MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY WITH HER FRIEND, ***DOUGLAS RAMSEY.*** SINCE THAT SCHOOL IS AFFILIATED WITH THE HELLFIRE CLUB, SHE WAS DEPENDING ON US TO BACK HER UP IN CASE OF TROUBLE.
ROGUE, YOU CAN REACH HOME FAR FASTER THAN ANY OF US -- SAVE PERHAPS STORM -- AND HAVE SUFFICIENT POWER TO AID KITTY SHOULD SHE NEED IT.
THE REST OF THE X-MEN WILL FOLLOW AS SOON AS WE'VE DEALT WITH THIS DRAGON.
STORM, YOU'RE THE BOSS, YOU WANT I SHOULD GO?
MUCH AS I WOULD LOVE TO, ROGUE, MY PLACE IS WITH THE TEAM.
THE DRAGON IS HERE BECAUSE OF US. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT -- WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ENSURE IT DOES NO HARM.
MAKE CERTAIN CYCLOPS -- AND THE NEW MUTANTS -- ARE ALL RIGHT, AS WELL!
AH'LL DO MY BEST, PROF.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SPOKEN AS I DID. THE OTHERS ARE CONFUSED AND ANGRY, THEY DON'T KNOW WHO'S IN CHARGE.
BUT WHAT AM I TO DO? AFTER YEARS OF BEING FORCED TO SIT ON THE SIDELINES, I'M AT LAST ABLE TO TRULY BE A PART OF THE TEAM. I CAN'T HELP LEADING IN THE FIELD -- AS I DO IN THE CLASSROOM -- THE ROLE COMES NATURALLY TO ME. I'M NOT SURE I SHOULD GIVE IT UP -- OR EVEN IF I WANT TO.
I HOPE CHARLEY KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOIN'. CONFLICT OF COMMAND IS NEVER GOOD, I HAD MY FILL OF IT WHEN 'RORO FIRST TOOK OVER AN' CYKE KEPT HORNING IN -- MEANIN' WELL AN' DOIN' WELL...
...BUT ALWAYS UNDERCUTTING STORM'S AUTHORITY AN' CONFIDENCE.
THAT WAS WHEN SHE STARTED GETTING TOUGH INSIDE -- I WONDER IF SHE WAS OVERCOMPENSATING, TRYIN' TO BE BETTER'N CYKE AT THE JOB HE DID BETTER THAN ANYONE?
STORM TORE OUT HER SOUL TO DO THIS JOB, CHARLEY -- AN' YOUR PULLIN' RANK AS MUCH AS TELLS HER IT WAS FOR NOTHING, THAT YOU THINK SHE CAN'T CUT IT.
THAT'S WRONG, BUB -- AN' SO ARE YOU.

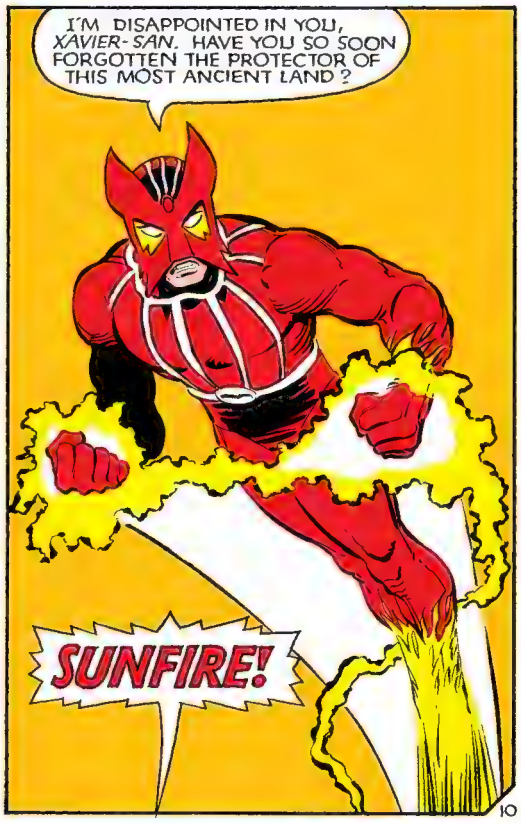
CLANGALANGALANGALANG
THE WAR ROOM OF THE NATIONAL COMMAND CENTER, JAPANESE COMBINED SELF-DEFENSE FORCES...
〈 SPOTTERS REPORT A GIANT DRAGON, SIR, HEADING FOR TOKYO! 〉
〈 IT CAN'T BE, THIS IS THE OFF-SEASON! 〉
〈 MONSTER ISLAND REPORTS ALL THEIR CREATURES PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR. 〉
〈 JUST WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS, ANOTHER MONSTER. WHY US, HIDEKI? WHY COULDN'T IT HAVE ATTACKED LOS ANGELES? 〉
〈 IT'S DIRECTLY OVER THE CITY, GENERAL. 〉
〈 "SOUND A STAGE-ONE ALERT! I WANT THAT BEAST DRIVEN OFF-- OR DESTROYED!" 〉
〈 ANOTHER SIGHTING, GENERAL -- IT'S THE AMERICAN SUPER HERO GROUP, THE X-MEN! 〉
〈 THEY'RE PURSUING THE DRAGON! 〉
〈 SPLENDID! OF COURSE I HAVE THE UTMOST FAITH IN OUR TROOPS AND WEAPONRY... 〉
〈... BUT AGAINST MENACES SUCH AS THIS, LADY MARIKO, IT'S BEST TO HAVE ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.
〈 THE-- X-MEN?!? 〉
〈 WOLVERINE SHOULD BE WITH THEM. 〉
〈 SHIRO, PERHAPS YOU ALSO MAY BE OF USE... 〉
〈 IS YOUR CONCERN FOR THE HOMELAND, MARIKO, OR FOR YOUR GAIJIN LOVER? 〉
〈 I AM LORD OF CLAN YASHIDA, COUSIN. 〉
〈 IT IS NOT YOUR PLACE TO QUESTION MY WILL -- MERELY OBEY. 〉

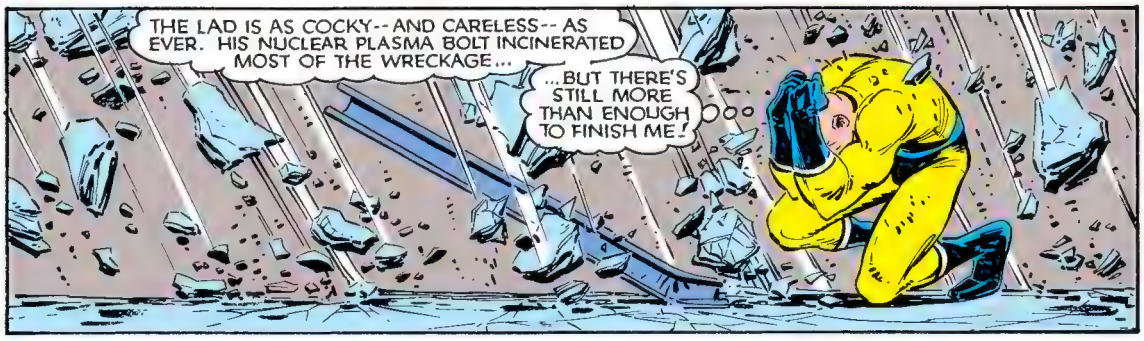

MEANWHILE...
... DOWNTOWN...
CRUNCH!
... THE DRAGON IS MAKING ITS PRESENCE FELT.
RRRRRUMMBLE
CRASH!
THE SIZE OF THAT THING-- AND THE STRENGTH--
--IT'S TEARING THAT SKY-SCRAPER APART WITH EASE!
BUT WHY?! IT WAS ALWAYS A GENTLE BEAST, OURS AND LOCKHEED'S FRIEND!
COULD ITS SIZE CHANGE-- AND THIS ALIEN ENVIRONMENT-- HAVE SO DISORIENTED IT THAT THE POOR CREATURE HAS BEEN DRIVEN MAD?!
OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS TO SAFEGUARD INNOCENT LIVES-- COLOSSUS, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IS THE FALLING DEBRIS.

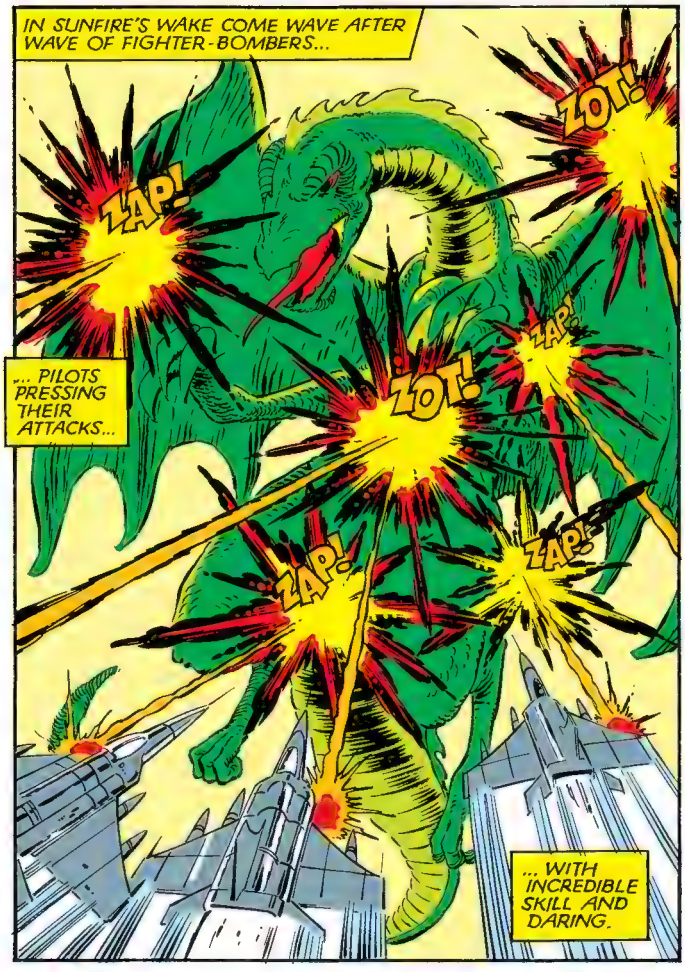

I AM GLAD OF SOME ACTION.
IT WILL TAKE MY MIND OFF THE LOVE-- AND HAPPINESS-- I HAVE LOST FOREVER. *
*AGAIN, READ SECRET WARS--L.
IN HIS ARMORED FORM, PETER RASPUTIN IS VIRTUALLY INVULNERABLE-- ONE OF THE STRONGEST BEINGS ON THE PLANET. NOW, HE USES THAT STRENGTH...
...TO PULVERIZE HUGE CHUNKS OF GLASS AND STEEL AND MASONRY BEFORE THEY HIT THE GROUND.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, STORM'S ELEMENTAL POWERS...
...CREATE A TORNADO THAT SCOOPS UP THE RUBBLE AND HURLS IT OUT TO SEA.
NIGHTCRAWLER'S JOB IS TO TELEPORT PEOPLE OUT OF HARM'S WAY...
BAMF
BAMF
THE STRAIN OF 'PORTING WITH PASSENGERS IS MURDEROUS --FOR ME AS WELL AS THEM, AND THEY ONLY HAVE TO DO THIS ONCE--BUT BETTER TO BE SICK THAN SQUISHED.
...WHILE XAVIER AND WOLVERINE SEE TO THOSE LESS FORTUNATE.
THERE ARE SCORES OF PEOPLE TRAPPED IN THE WRECKAGE, WOLVERINE-- I CAN HEAR THEIR MENTAL SCREAMS, FEEL THEIR AGONY!
JUST POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, CHARLEY. I'LL DO THE REST.

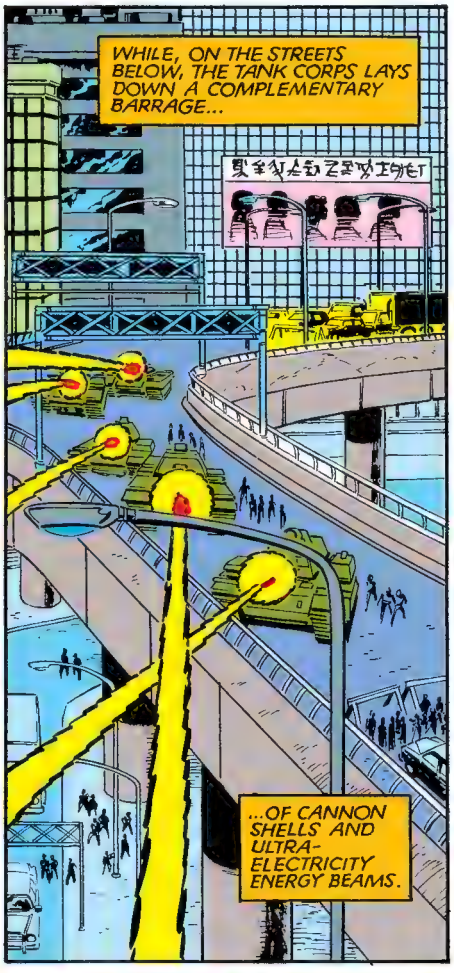

PROFESSOR?
YES, STORM?
CAN YOU FORGE A PSILINK WITH THE DRAGON? IT KNOWS YOU, TRUSTS YOU--AS MUCH AS ANY OF US-- PERHAPS YOU CAN CALM HER.
I'LL TRY.
ASTONISHING-- FOR THE MOST PART, THE CREATURE'S THOUGHT PROCESSES ARE QUITE NORMAL AND ORDERLY. WHAT SHE'S DOING MAKES PERFECT SENSE. SHE CAN'T COMPREHEND WHY EVERYONE'S SO UPSET. I'LL HAVE TO PROBE DEEPER, MAKE HER UNDERSTAND--NO!!
SHE'S MISINTERPRETING MY MINDTOUCH AS AN ATTACK!
SHE'S TOPPLING THAT BUILDING ON ME!


HOWEVER, IN THE PROVERBIAL NICK OF TIME...
SHOOM!
WHAT THE DEVIL--?!!

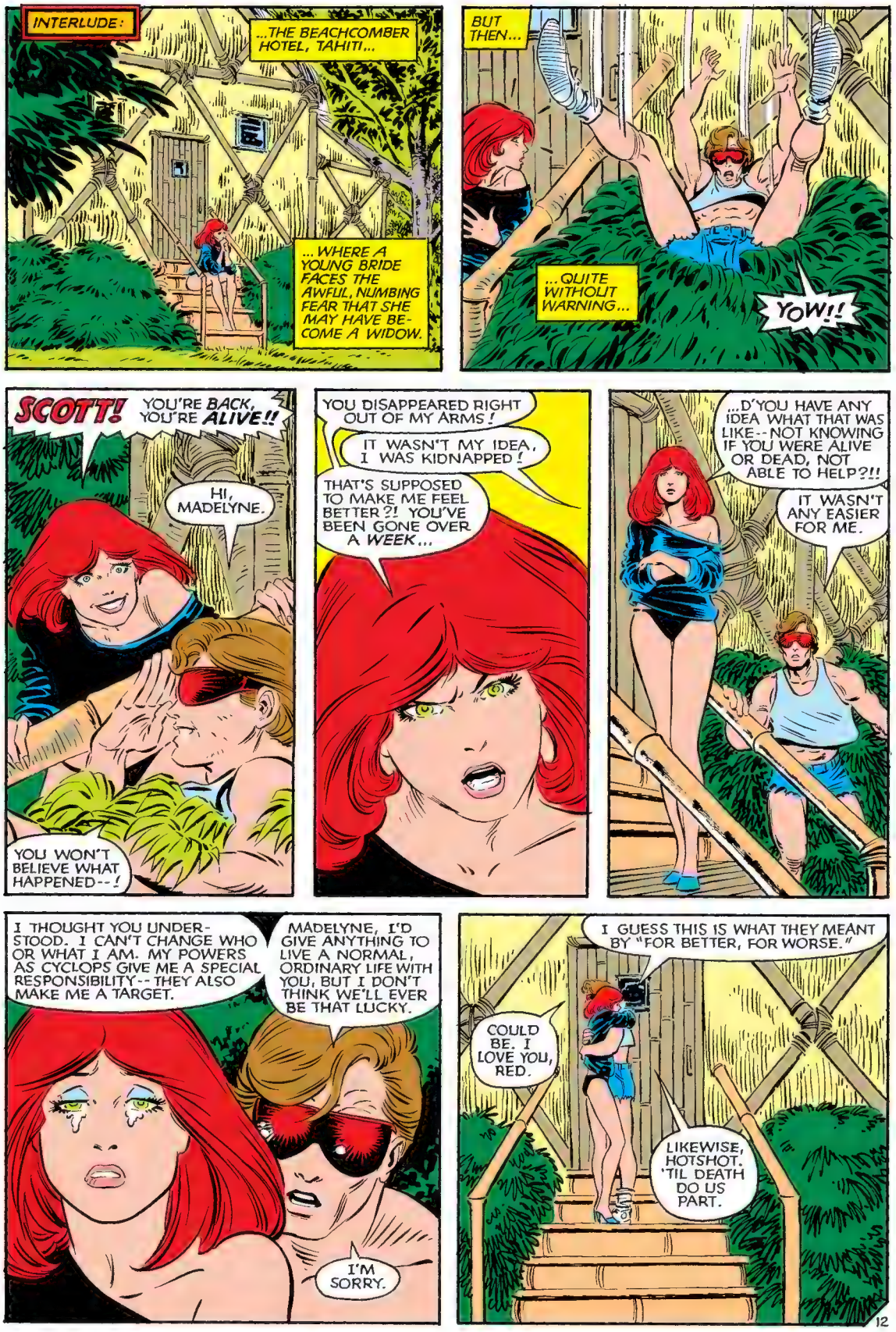

I'M DISAPPOINTED IN YOU, XAVIER-SAN. HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN THE PROTECTOR OF THIS MOST ANCIENT LAND?
SUNFIRE!

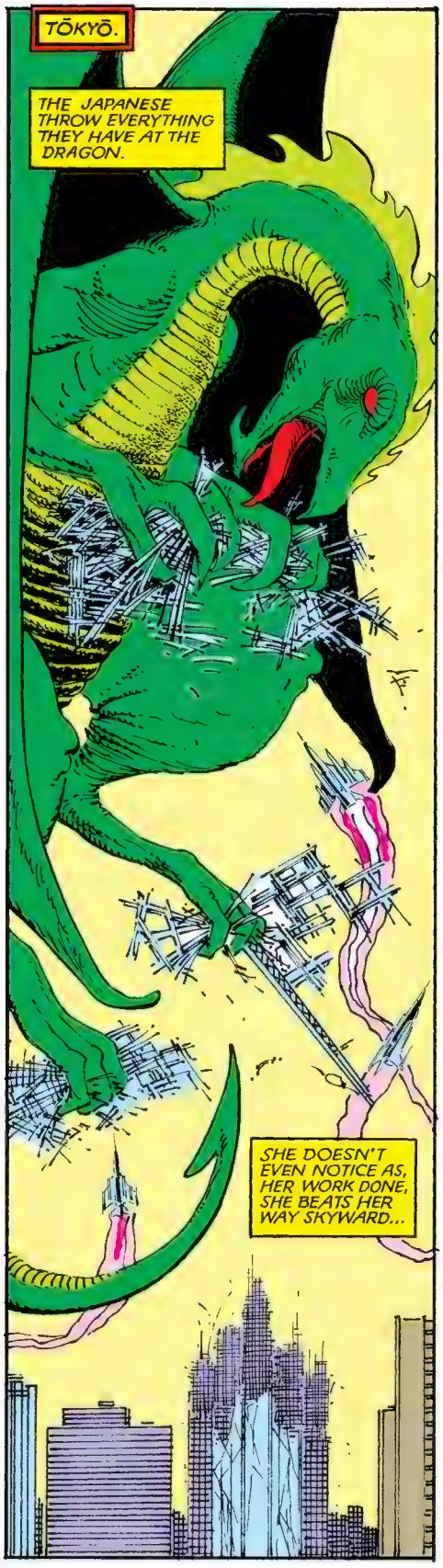

THE LAD IS AS COCKY--AND CARELESS--AS EVER. HIS NUCLEAR PLASMA BOLT INCINERATED MOST OF THE WRECKAGE...
...BUT THERE'S STILL MORE THAN ENOUGH TO FINISH ME!

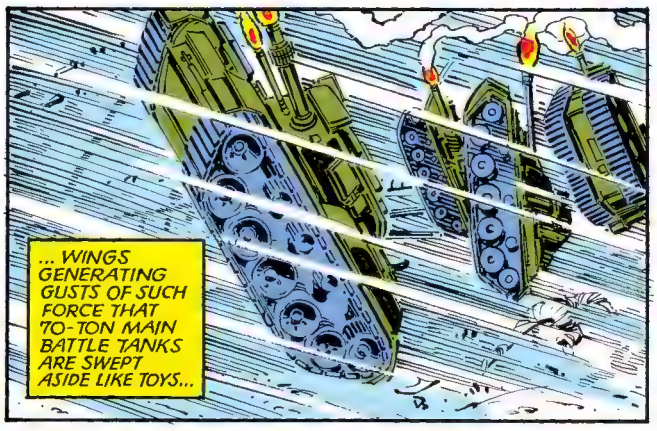

IN SUNFIRE'S WAKE COME WAVE AFTER WAVE OF FIGHTER-BOMBERS...
ZAP!
ZOT!
ZAP!
ZOT!
ZAP!
ZAP!
... PILOTS PRESSING THEIR ATTACKS...
... WITH INCREDIBLE SKILL AND DARING.

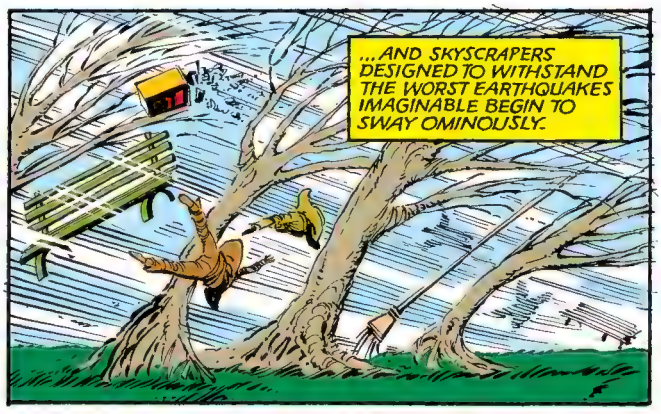

WHILE, ON THE STREETS BELOW, THE TANK CORPS LAYS DOWN A COMPLEMENTARY BARRAGE...
...OF CANNON SHELLS AND ULTRA-ELECTRICITY ENERGY BEAMS.

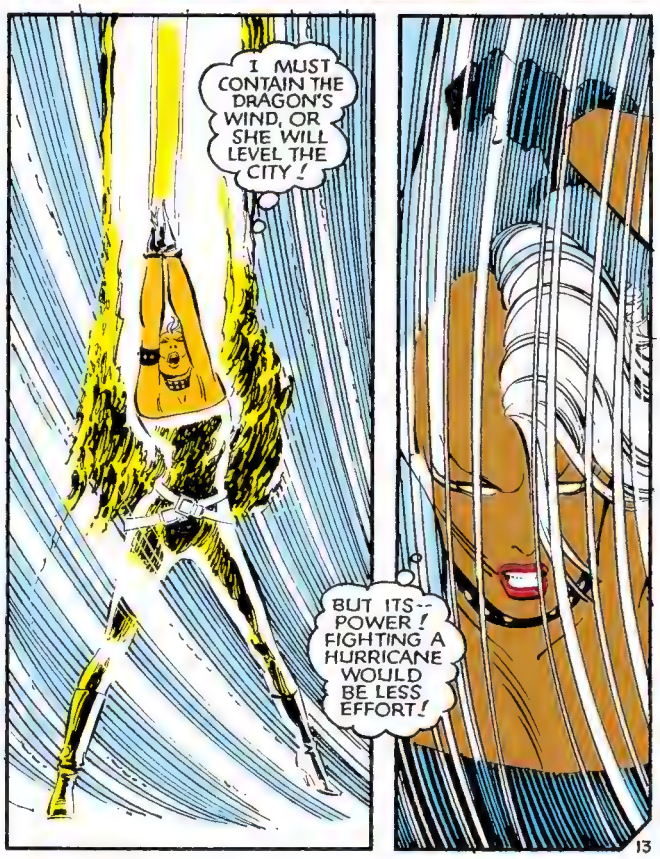
BOSZHE MOY!
THOSE GUYS KNOW THEIR BUSINESS. BUT THEN, FROM WHAT MARIKO TOLD ME--AN' WHAT I SAW MYSELF WHEN I WORKED OVER HERE--
--THEY'VE HAD A LOT OF PRACTICE.
LOCKHEED WON'T LIKE THEM SHOOTING AT HIS LADY-LOVE.
WHAT'S TO WORRY, ELF--THEY'RE NOT DOIN' HER ANY DAMAGE.

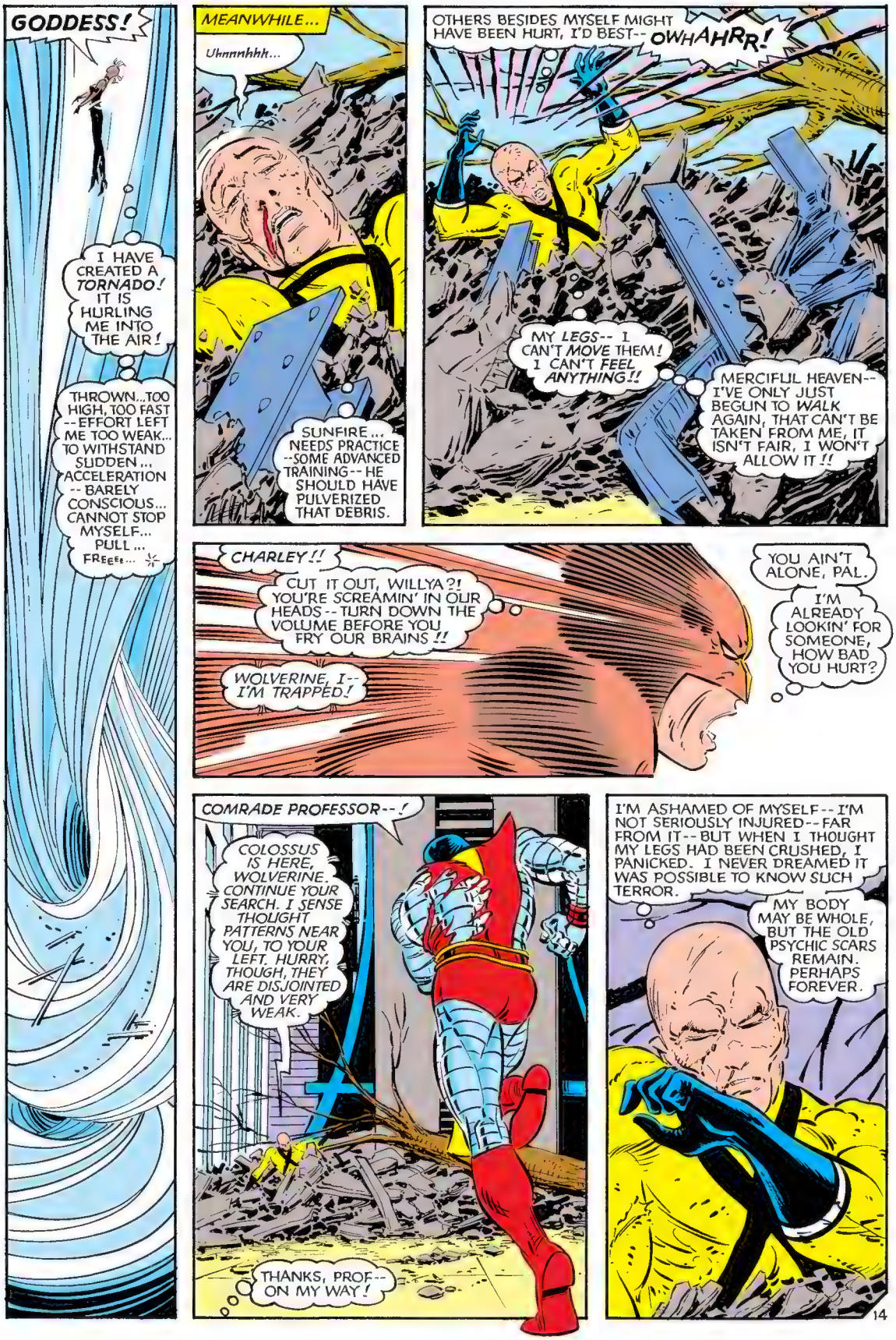

INTERLUDE:
...THE BEACHCOMBER HOTEL, TAHITI...
...WHERE A YOUNG BRIDE FACES THE AWFUL, NUMBING FEAR THAT SHE MAY HAVE BECOME A WIDOW.
BUT THEN...
...QUITE WITHOUT WARNING...
YOW!!
SCOTT! YOU'RE BACK, YOU'RE ALIVE!!
HI, MADELYNE.
YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED--!
YOU DISAPPEARED RIGHT OUT OF MY ARMS!
IT WASN'T MY IDEA, I WAS KIDNAPPED!
THAT'S SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?! YOU'VE BEEN GONE OVER A WEEK...
...D'YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT WAS LIKE--NOT KNOWING IF YOU WERE ALIVE OR DEAD, NOT ABLE TO HELP?!!
IT WASN'T ANY EASIER FOR ME.
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD. I CAN'T CHANGE WHO OR WHAT I AM. MY POWERS AS CYCLOPS GIVE ME A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY--THEY ALSO MAKE ME A TARGET.
MADELYNE, I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO LIVE A NORMAL, ORDINARY LIFE WITH YOU, BUT I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER BE THAT LUCKY.
I'M SORRY.
I GUESS THIS IS WHAT THEY MEANT BY "FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE."
COULD BE. I LOVE YOU, RED.
LIKEWISE, HOTSHOT. 'TIL DEATH DO US PART.

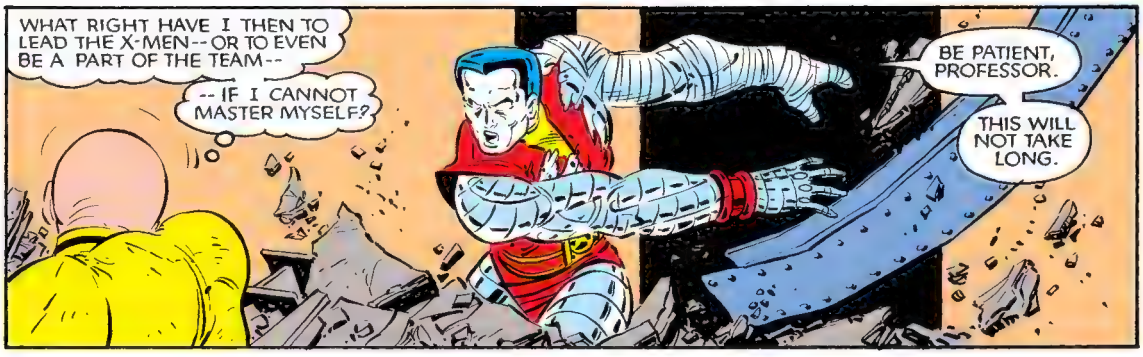

TŌKYŌ.
THE JAPANESE THROW EVERYTHING THEY HAVE AT THE DRAGON.
SHE DOESN'T EVEN NOTICE AS, HER WORK DONE, SHE BEATS HER WAY SKYWARD...


... WINGS GENERATING GUSTS OF SUCH FORCE THAT 70-TON MAIN BATTLE TANKS ARE SWEPT ASIDE LIKE TOYS...

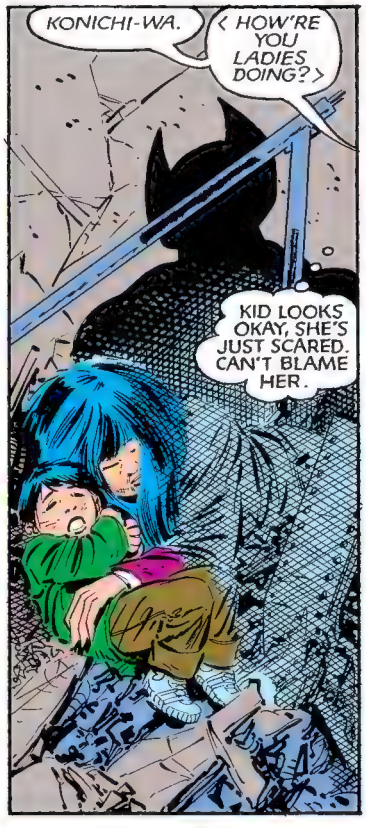

...AND SKYSCRAPERS DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND THE WORST EARTHQUAKES IMAGINABLE BEGIN TO SWAY OMINOUSLY.

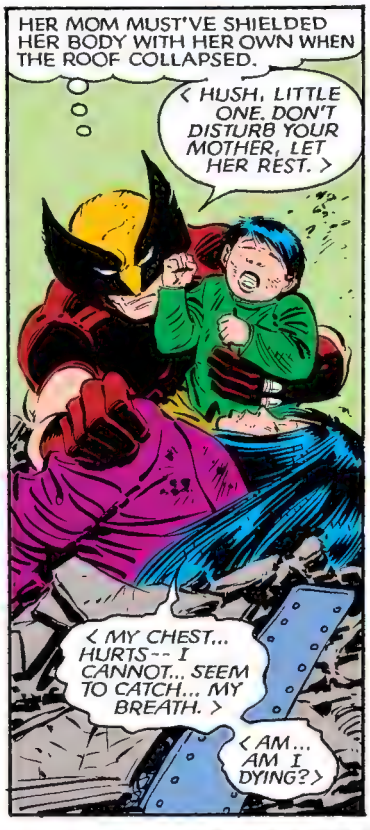

I MUST CONTAIN THE DRAGON'S WIND, OR SHE WILL LEVEL THE CITY!
BUT ITS-- POWER! FIGHTING A HURRICANE WOULD BE LESS EFFORT!

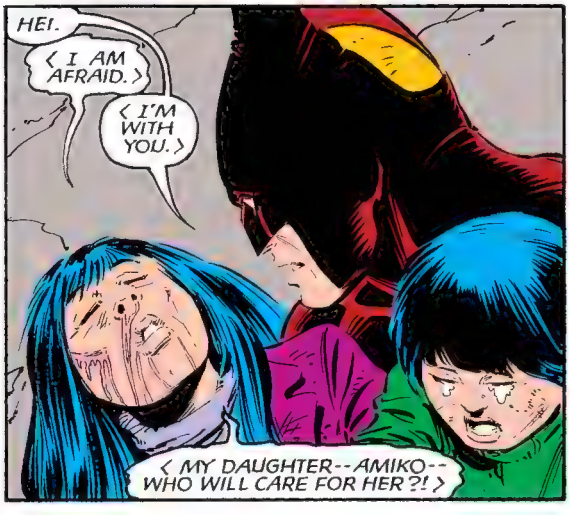

GODDESS!
I HAVE CREATED A TORNADO! IT IS HURLING ME INTO THE AIR!
THROWN...TOO HIGH, TOO FAST --EFFORT LEFT ME TOO WEAK... TO WITHSTAND SUDDEN... ACCELERATION -- BARELY CONSCIOUS... CANNOT STOP MYSELF... PULL... FREEEE...
MEANWHILE...
Uhnnnhhh...
SUNFIRE... NEEDS PRACTICE --SOME ADVANCED TRAINING-- HE SHOULD HAVE PULVERIZED THAT DEBRIS.
OTHERS BESIDES MYSELF MIGHT HAVE BEEN HURT, I'D BEST-- OWHAHRR!
MY LEGS-- I CAN'T MOVE THEM! I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING!!
MERCIFUL HEAVEN-- I'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO WALK AGAIN, THAT CAN'T BE TAKEN FROM ME, IT ISN'T FAIR, I WON'T ALLOW IT!!
CHARLEY!!
CUT IT OUT, WILLYA?! YOU'RE SCREAMIN' IN OUR HEADS -- TURN DOWN THE VOLUME BEFORE YOU FRY OUR BRAINS!!
WOLVERINE, I-- I'M TRAPPED!
YOU AIN'T ALONE, PAL.
I'M ALREADY LOOKIN' FOR SOMEONE, HOW BAD YOU HURT?
COMRADE PROFESSOR--!
COLOSSUS IS HERE, WOLVERINE. CONTINUE YOUR SEARCH. I SENSE THOUGHT PATTERNS NEAR YOU, TO YOUR LEFT. HURRY, THOUGH, THEY ARE DISJOINTED AND VERY WEAK.
THANKS, PROF-- ON MY WAY!
I'M ASHAMED OF MYSELF-- I'M NOT SERIOUSLY INJURED-- FAR FROM IT-- BUT WHEN I THOUGHT MY LEGS HAD BEEN CRUSHED, I PANICKED. I NEVER DREAMED IT WAS POSSIBLE TO KNOW SUCH TERROR.
MY BODY MAY BE WHOLE, BUT THE OLD PSYCHIC SCARS REMAIN. PERHAPS FOREVER.


WHAT RIGHT HAVE I THEN TO LEAD THE X-MEN--OR TO EVEN BE A PART OF THE TEAM--
--IF I CANNOT MASTER MYSELF?
BE PATIENT, PROFESSOR.
THIS WILL NOT TAKE LONG.

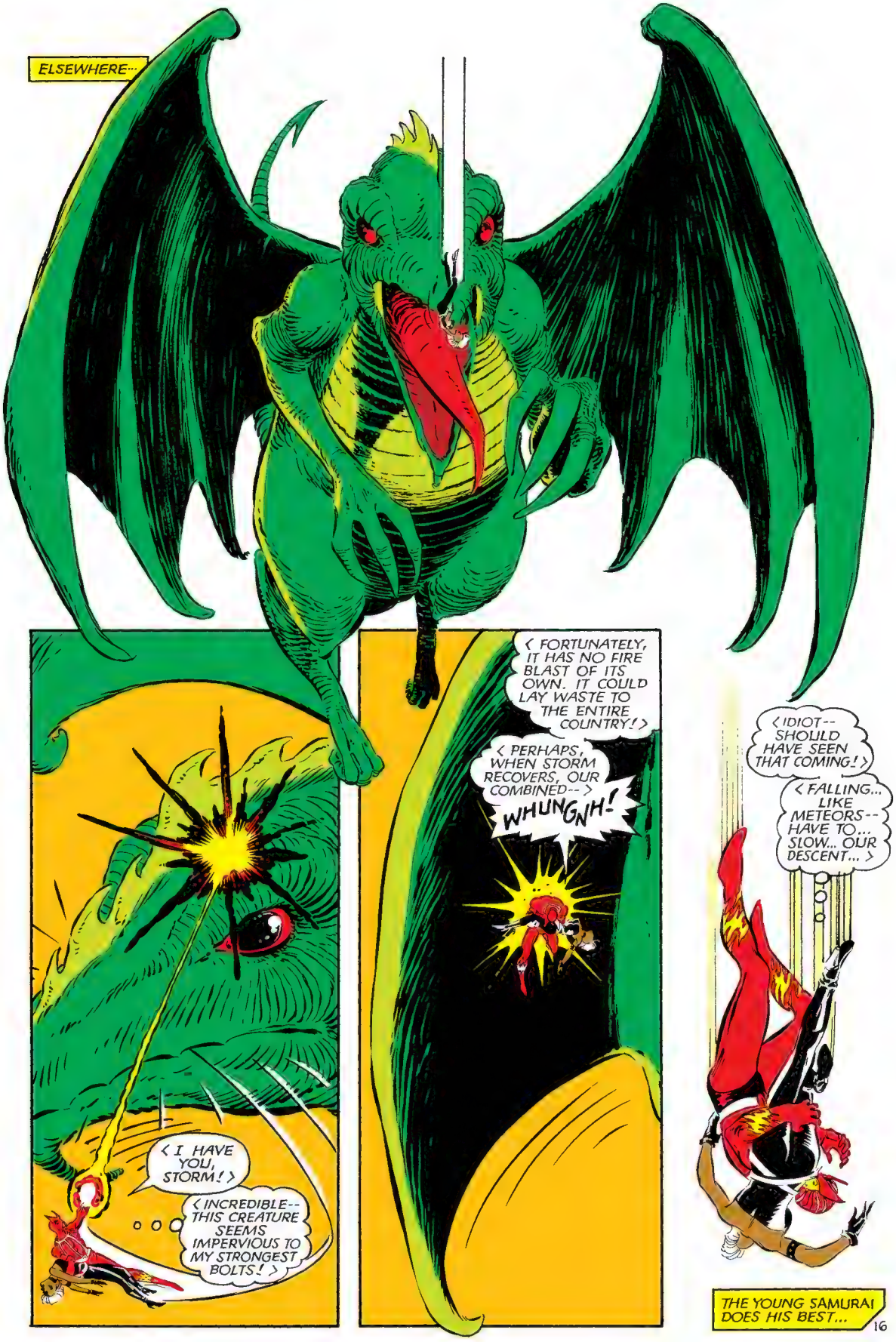
CHARLEY WAS REALLY SPOOKED--DO HIM SOME GOOD TO ACT HUMAN ONCE AN'A WHILE, HE SHOULD TRY IT MORE OFTEN.
I'M CLOSE ENOUGH NOW, I DON'T NEED HIM TO GUIDE ME. MY OWN ENHANCED SENSES'LL DO THE TRICK.
I SMELL BLOOD.

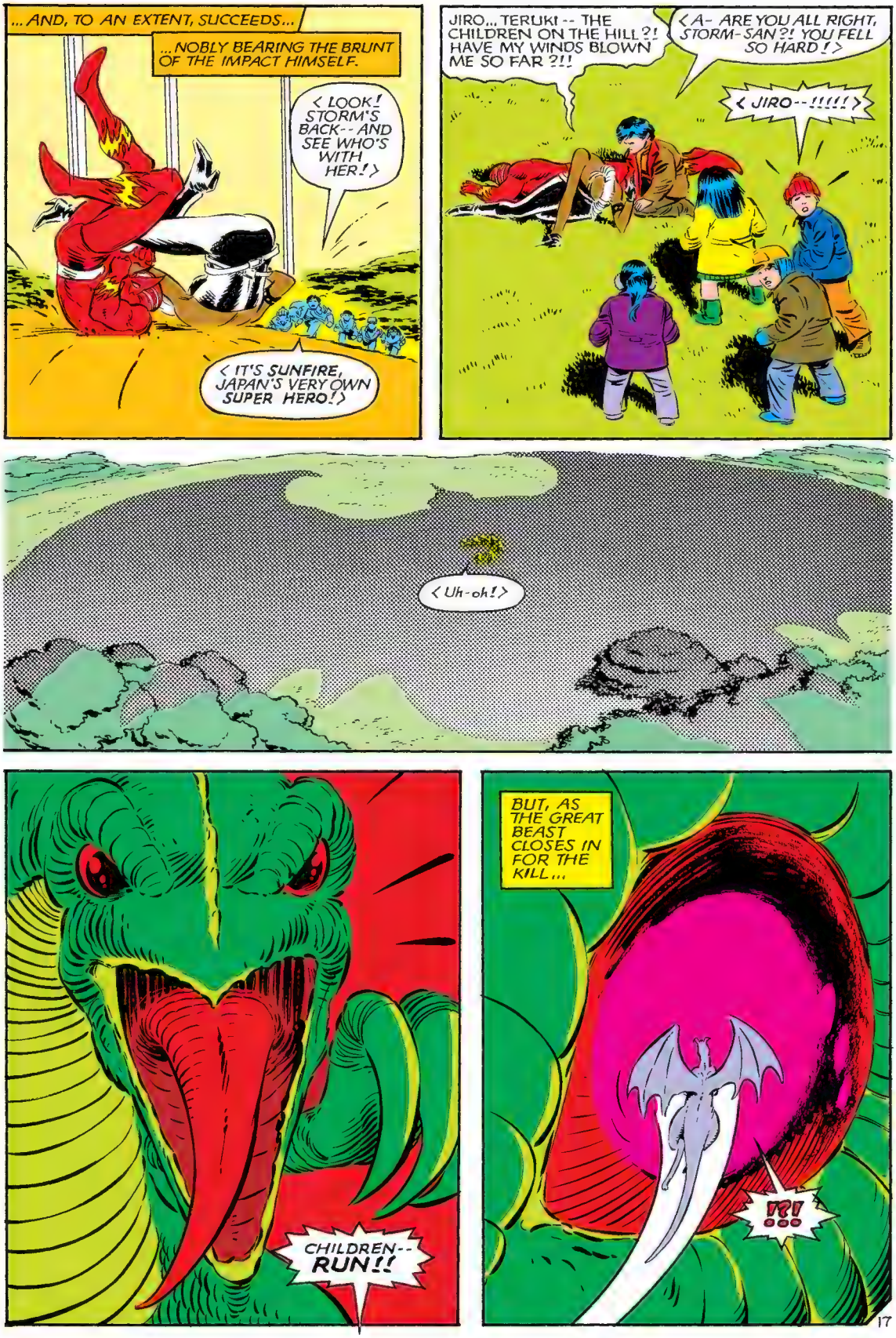

KONICHI-WA.
< HOW'RE YOU LADIES DOING? >
KID LOOKS OKAY, SHE'S JUST SCARED. CAN'T BLAME HER.

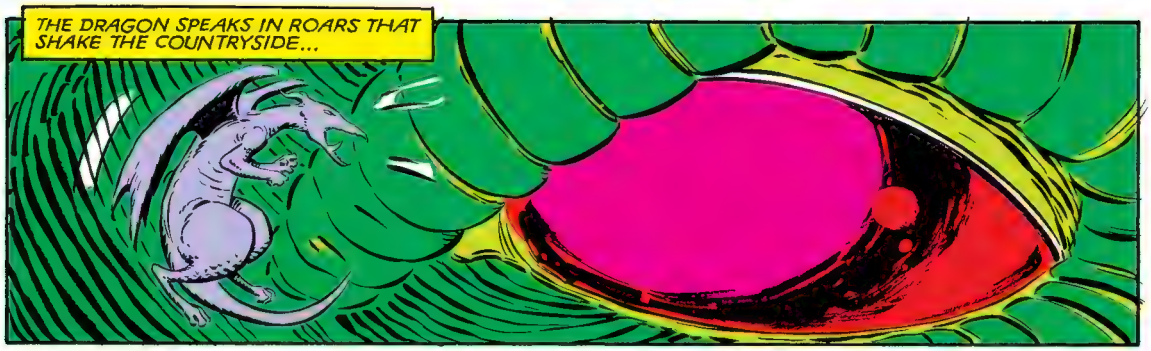

HER MOM MUST'VE SHIELDED HER BODY WITH HER OWN WHEN THE ROOF COLLAPSED.
< HUSH, LITTLE ONE. DON'T DISTURB YOUR MOTHER, LET HER REST. >
< MY CHEST... HURTS-- I CANNOT... SEEM TO CATCH... MY BREATH. >
< AM... AM I DYING? >


HEI.
< I AM AFRAID. >
< I'M WITH YOU. >
< MY DAUGHTER--AMIKO--WHO WILL CARE FOR HER?! >

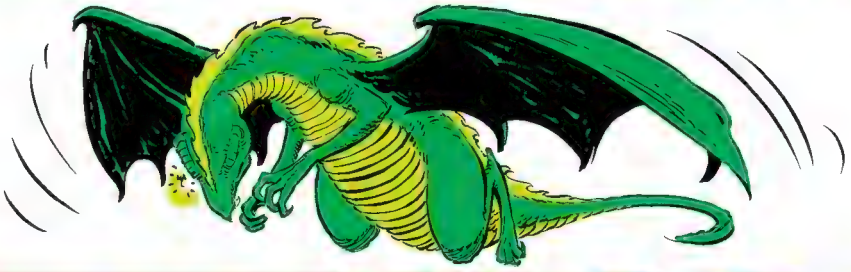
< I'LL KEEP HER SAFE. I'LL SEE SHE'S RAISED AS IF SHE WERE MY OWN. YOU HAVE MY WORD. >
ARIGATO, SAMURAI-SAN--DOMO... ARIGATO...

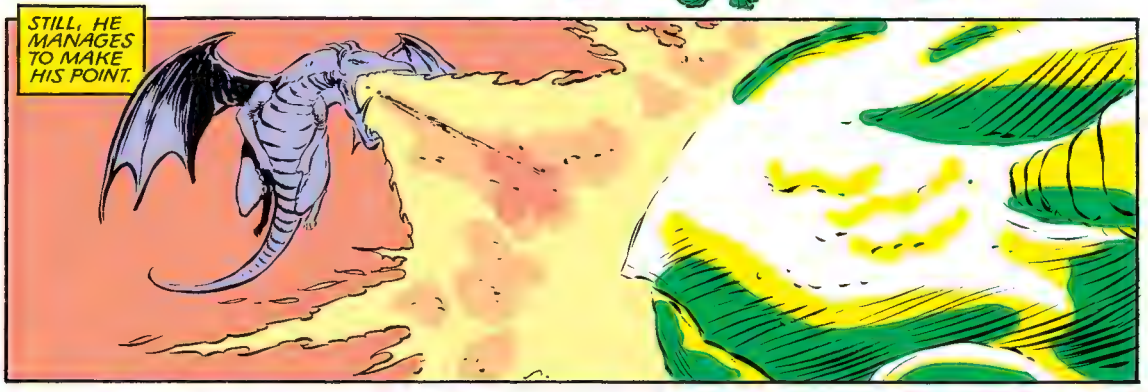

ELSEWHERE...
〈 I HAVE YOU, STORM! 〉
〈 INCREDIBLE-- THIS CREATURE SEEMS IMPERVIOUS TO MY STRONGEST BOLTS! 〉
〈 FORTUNATELY, IT HAS NO FIRE BLAST OF ITS OWN. IT COULD LAY WASTE TO THE ENTIRE COUNTRY! 〉
〈 PERHAPS, WHEN STORM RECOVERS, OUR COMBINED-- 〉
WHUNGNH!
〈 IDIOT-- SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT COMING! 〉
〈 FALLING... LIKE METEORS-- HAVE TO... SLOW... OUR DESCENT... 〉
THE YOUNG SAMURAI DOES HIS BEST...


...AND, TO AN EXTENT, SUCCEEDS...
...NOBLY BEARING THE BRUNT OF THE IMPACT HIMSELF.
<LOOK! STORM'S BACK-- AND SEE WHO'S WITH HER!>
<IT'S SUNFIRE, JAPAN'S VERY OWN SUPER HERO!>
JIRO... TERUKI -- THE CHILDREN ON THE HILL?! HAVE MY WINDS BLOWN ME SO FAR ?!!
<A- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, STORM-SAN?! YOU FELL SO HARD!>
<JIRO--!!!!!>
<Uh-oh!>
CHILDREN-- RUN!!
BUT, AS THE GREAT BEAST CLOSES IN FOR THE KILL...
!?!

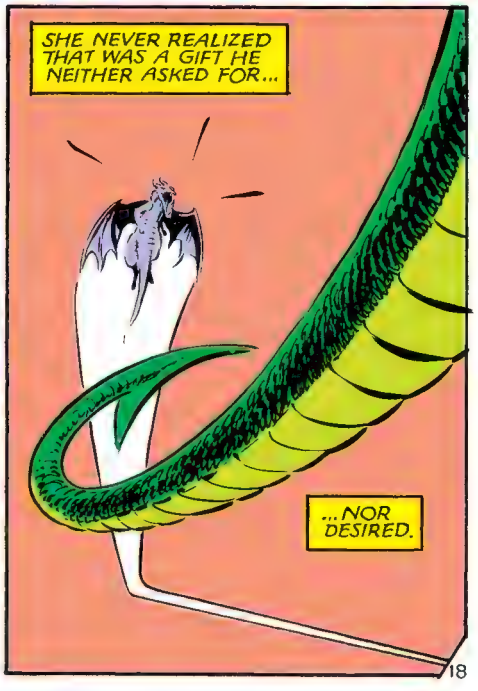


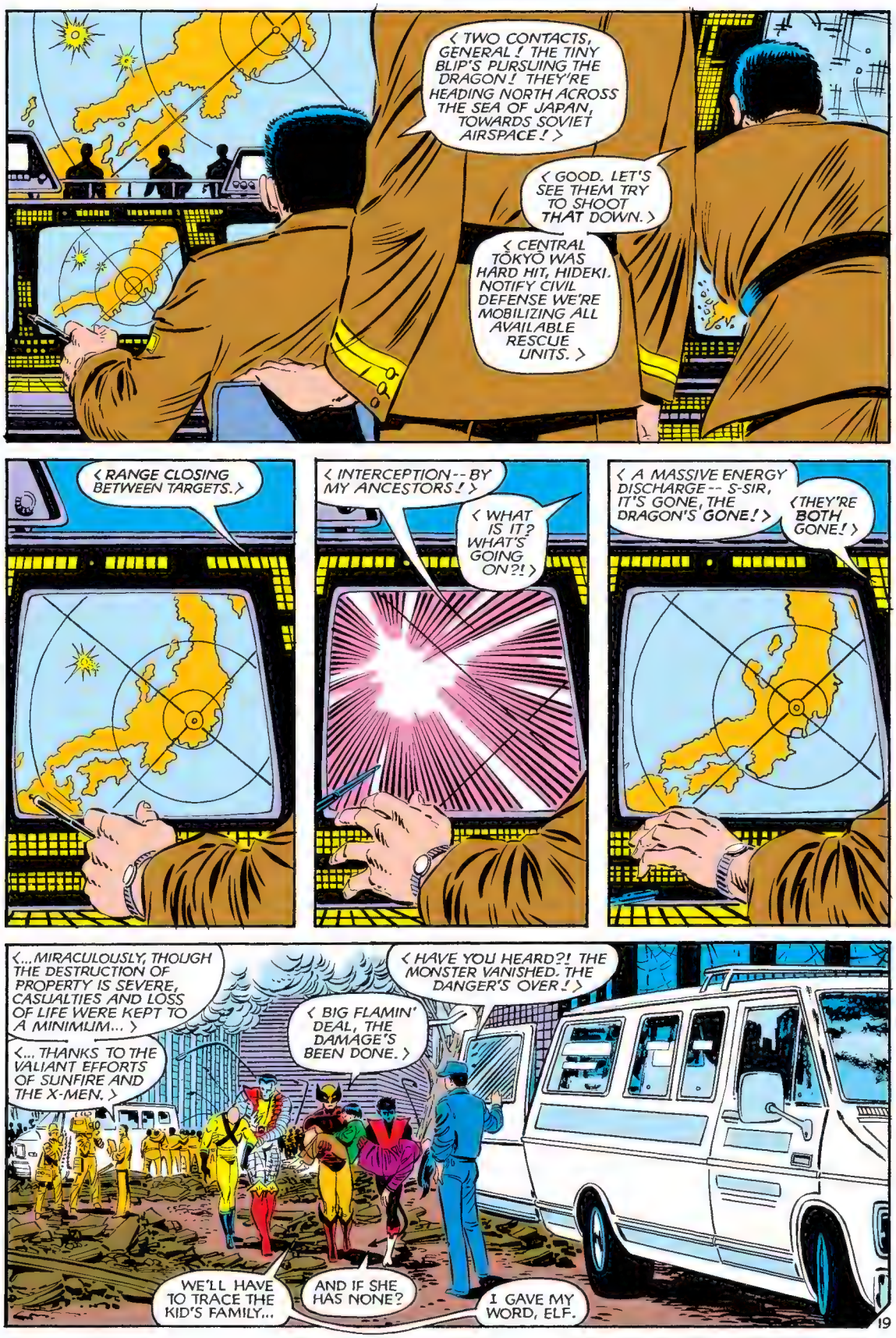
...WHILE LOCKHEED'S VOICE CAN BARELY BE HEARD.

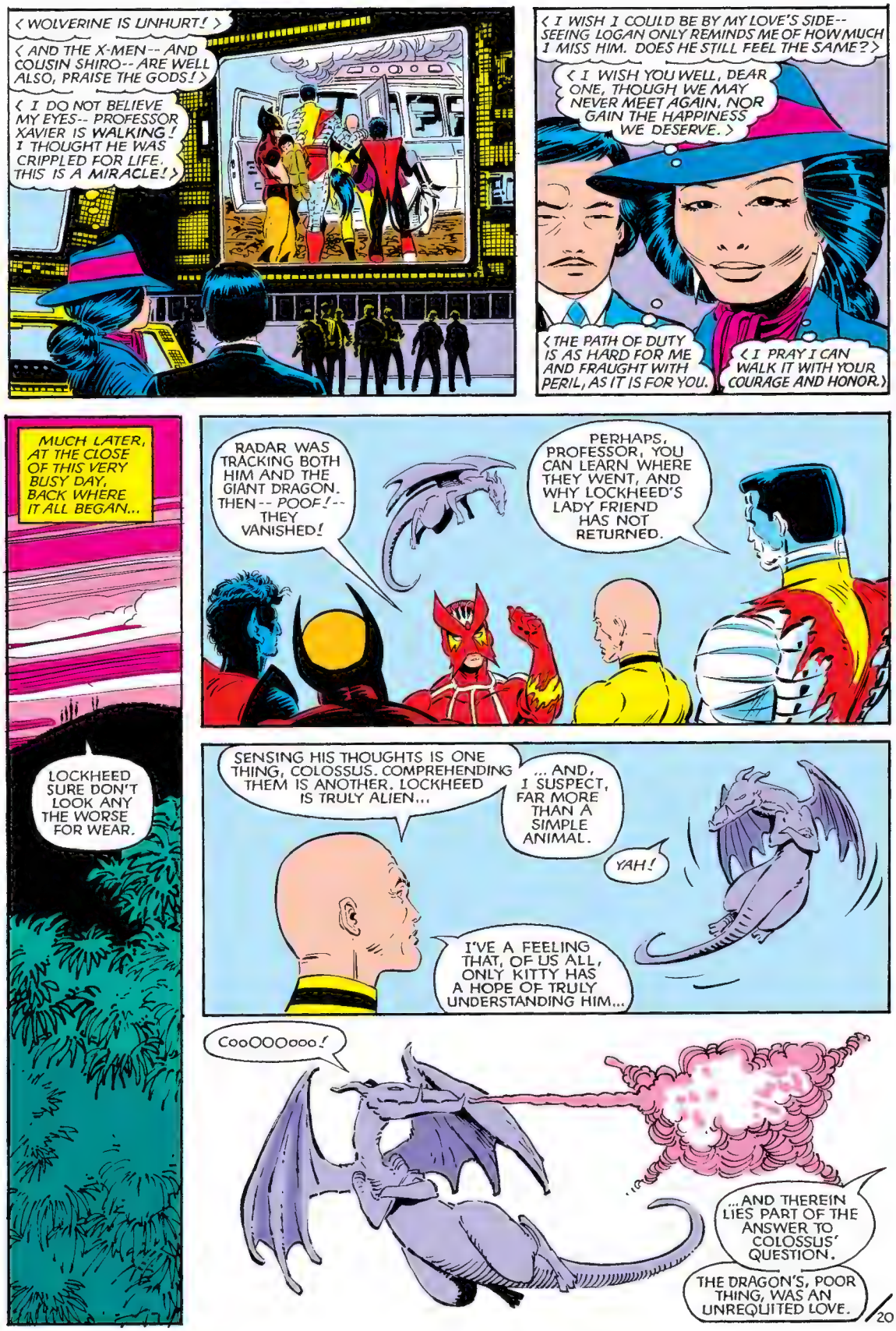


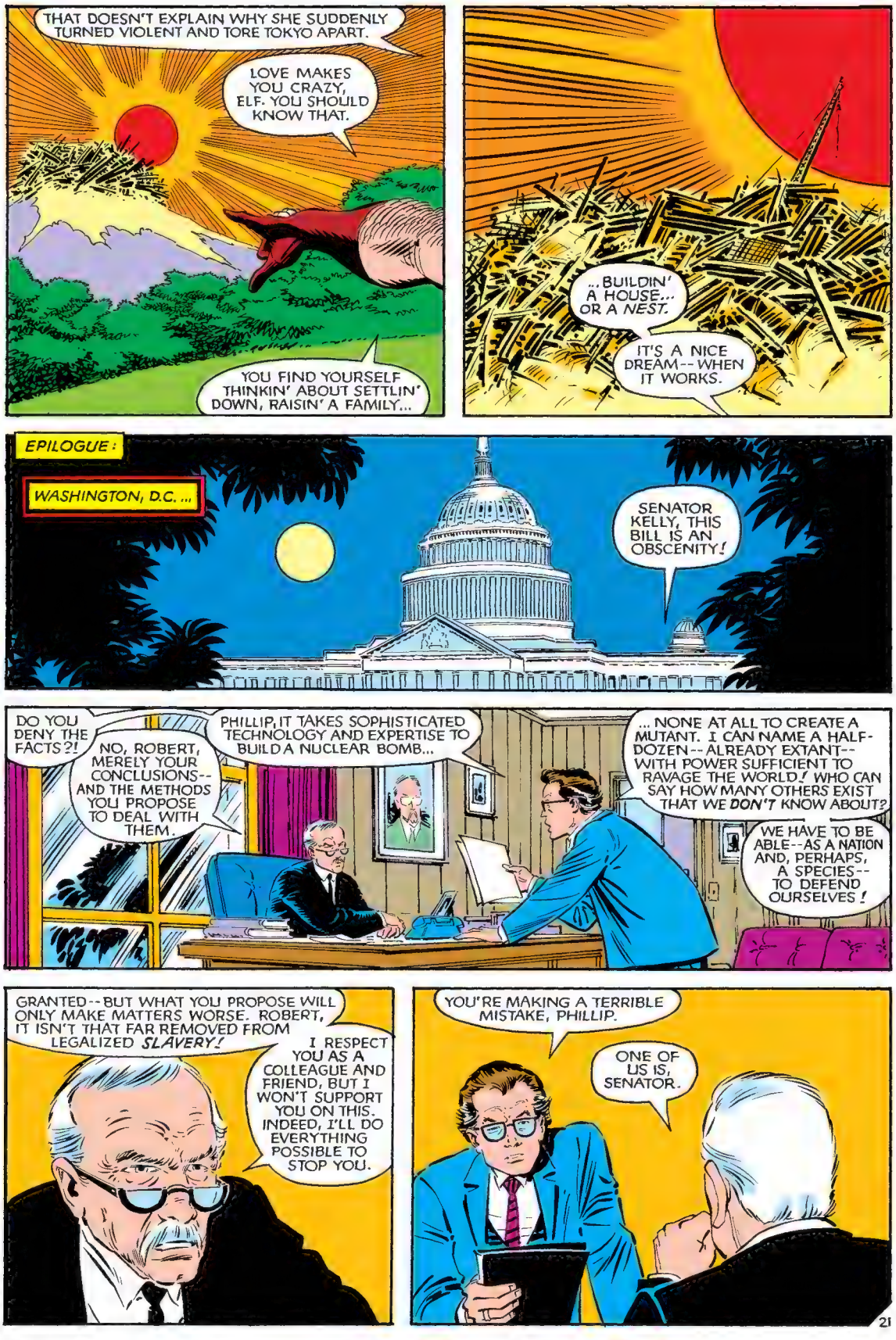


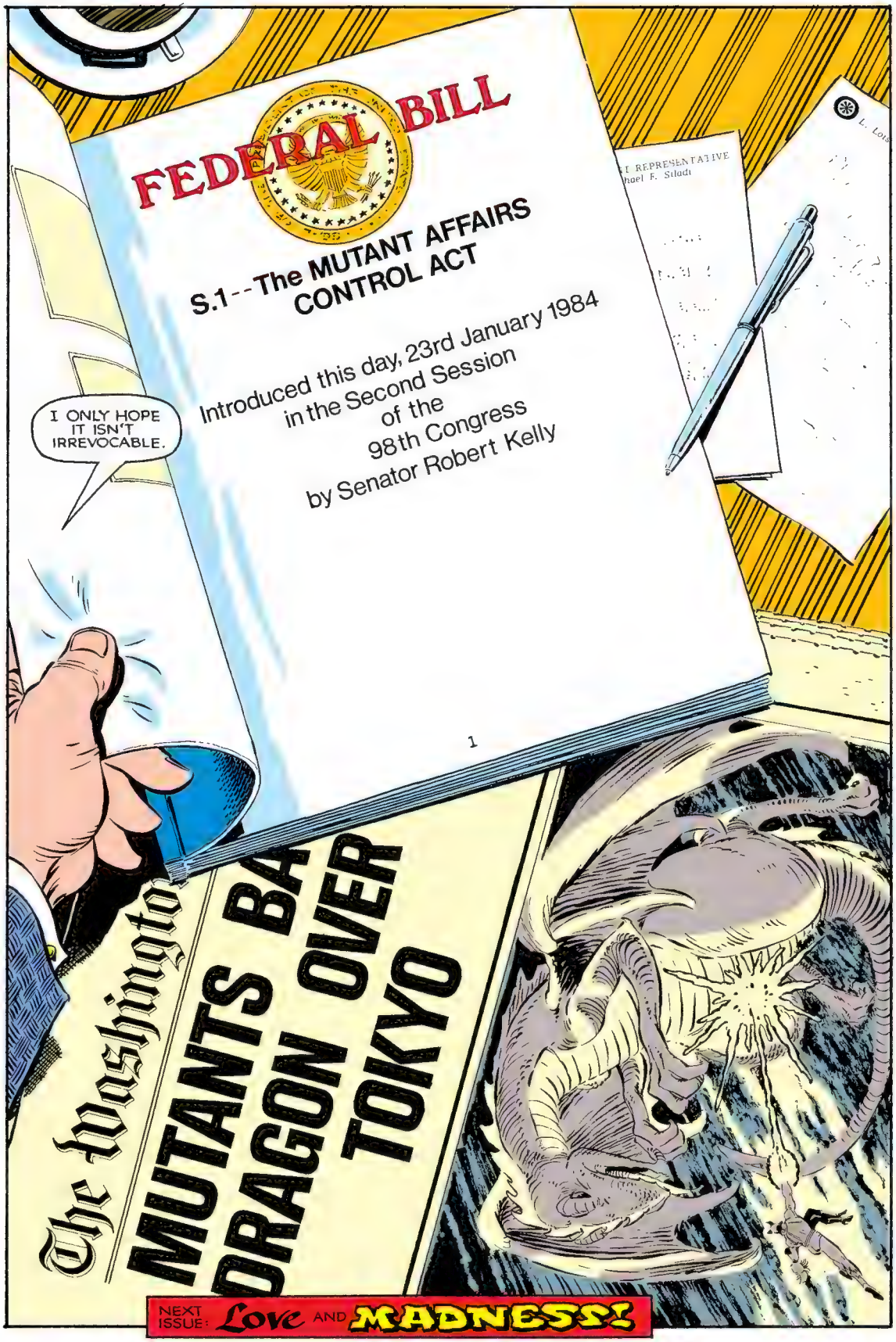
... MORE IN SHOCK THAN ACTUAL PAIN. SHE CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING-- HOW COULD LOCKHEED TREAT HER SO, WHEN SHE HAD GIVEN HIM HER HEARTS?

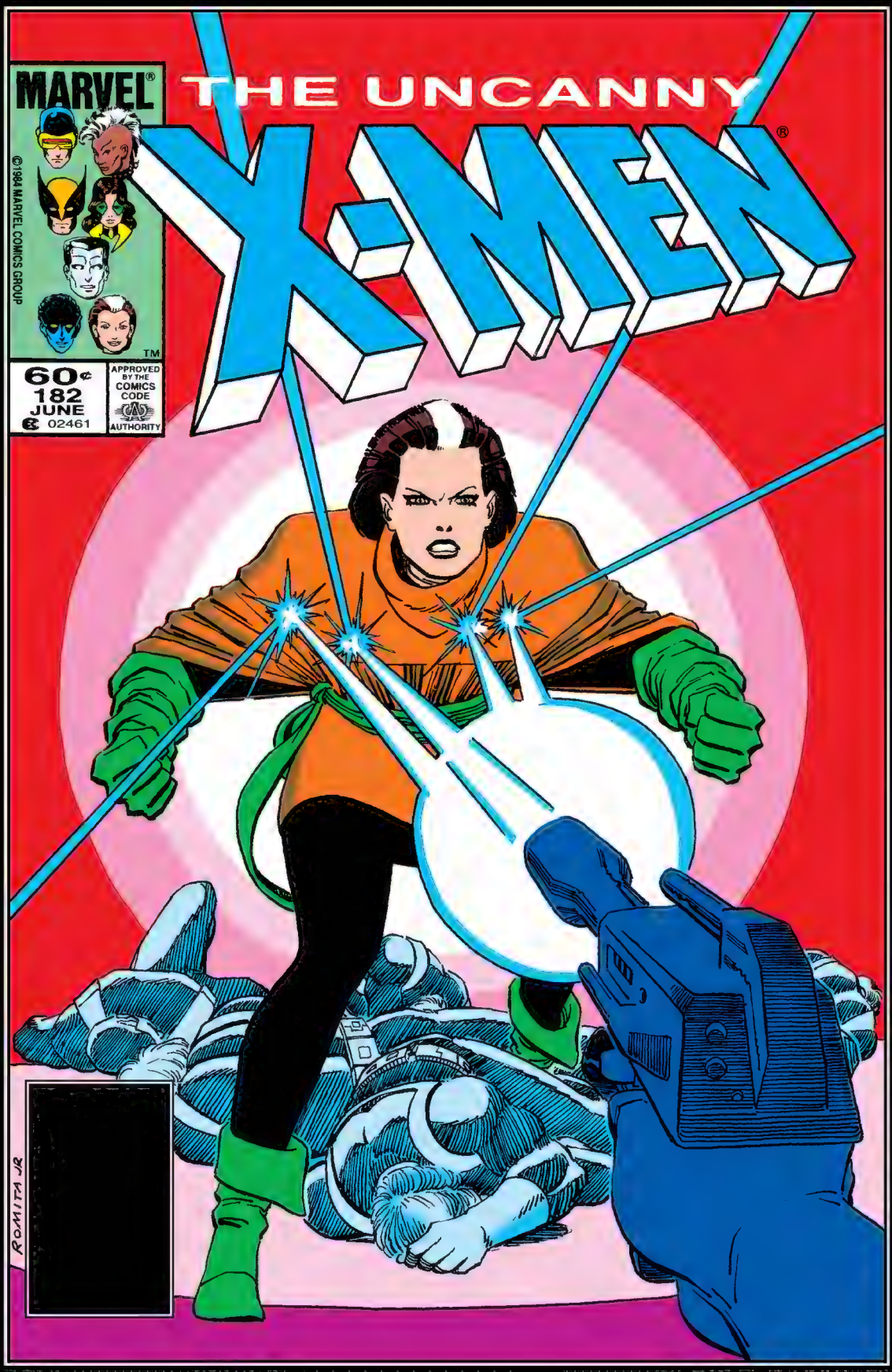



〈 TWO CONTACTS, GENERAL! THE TINY BLIP'S PURSUING THE DRAGON! THEY'RE HEADING NORTH ACROSS THE SEA OF JAPAN, TOWARDS SOVIET AIRSPACE! 〉
〈 GOOD. LET'S SEE THEM TRY TO SHOOT THAT DOWN. 〉
〈 CENTRAL TOKYO WAS HARD HIT, HIDEKI. NOTIFY CIVIL DEFENSE WE'RE MOBILIZING ALL AVAILABLE RESCUE UNITS. 〉
〈 RANGE CLOSING BETWEEN TARGETS. 〉
〈 INTERCEPTION -- BY MY ANCESTORS! 〉
〈 WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?! 〉
〈 A MASSIVE ENERGY DISCHARGE -- S-SIR, IT'S GONE, THE DRAGON'S GONE! 〉
〈 THEY'RE BOTH GONE! 〉
〈 ...MIRACULOUSLY, THOUGH THE DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY IS SEVERE, CASUALTIES AND LOSS OF LIFE WERE KEPT TO A MINIMUM... 〉
〈 ...THANKS TO THE VALIANT EFFORTS OF SUNFIRE AND THE X-MEN. 〉
〈 HAVE YOU HEARD?! THE MONSTER VANISHED. THE DANGER'S OVER! 〉
〈 BIG FLAMIN' DEAL, THE DAMAGE'S BEEN DONE. 〉
WE'LL HAVE TO TRACE THE KID'S FAMILY...
AND IF SHE HAS NONE?
I GAVE MY WORD, ELF.


〈 WOLVERINE IS UNHURT! 〉
〈 AND THE X-MEN-- AND COUSIN SHIRO-- ARE WELL ALSO, PRAISE THE GODS! 〉
〈 I DO NOT BELIEVE MY EYES-- PROFESSOR XAVIER IS WALKING! I THOUGHT HE WAS CRIPPLED FOR LIFE. THIS IS A MIRACLE! 〉
〈 I WISH I COULD BE BY MY LOVE'S SIDE-- SEEING LOGAN ONLY REMINDS ME OF HOW MUCH I MISS HIM. DOES HE STILL FEEL THE SAME? 〉
〈 I WISH YOU WELL, DEAR ONE, THOUGH WE MAY NEVER MEET AGAIN, NOR GAIN THE HAPPINESS WE DESERVE. 〉
〈 THE PATH OF DUTY IS AS HARD FOR ME AND FRAUGHT WITH PERIL, AS IT IS FOR YOU.
〈 I PRAY I CAN WALK IT WITH YOUR COURAGE AND HONOR. 〉
MUCH LATER, AT THE CLOSE OF THIS VERY BUSY DAY, BACK WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...
LOCKHEED SURE DON'T LOOK ANY THE WORSE FOR WEAR.
RADAR WAS TRACKING BOTH HIM AND THE GIANT DRAGON. THEN-- POOF!-- THEY VANISHED!
PERHAPS, PROFESSOR, YOU CAN LEARN WHERE THEY WENT, AND WHY LOCKHEED'S LADY FRIEND HAS NOT RETURNED.
SENSING HIS THOUGHTS IS ONE THING, COLOSSUS. COMPREHENDING THEM IS ANOTHER. LOCKHEED IS TRULY ALIEN...
... AND, I SUSPECT, FAR MORE THAN A SIMPLE ANIMAL.
YAH!
I'VE A FEELING THAT, OF US ALL, ONLY KITTY HAS A HOPE OF TRULY UNDERSTANDING HIM...
CooOOOooo!
...AND THEREIN LIES PART OF THE ANSWER TO COLOSSUS' QUESTION.
THE DRAGON'S, POOR THING, WAS AN UNREQUITED LOVE.


THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY SHE SUDDENLY TURNED VIOLENT AND TORE TOKYO APART.
LOVE MAKES YOU CRAZY, ELF. YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT.
YOU FIND YOURSELF THINKIN' ABOUT SETTLIN' DOWN, RAISIN' A FAMILY...
...BUILDIN' A HOUSE... OR A NEST.
IT'S A NICE DREAM--WHEN IT WORKS.
EPILOGUE:
WASHINGTON, D.C. ...
SENATOR KELLY, THIS BILL IS AN OBSCENITY!
DO YOU DENY THE FACTS?!
NO, ROBERT, MERELY YOUR CONCLUSIONS--AND THE METHODS YOU PROPOSE TO DEAL WITH THEM.
PHILLIP, IT TAKES SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY AND EXPERTISE TO BUILD A NUCLEAR BOMB...
...NONE AT ALL TO CREATE A MUTANT. I CAN NAME A HALF-DOZEN--ALREADY EXTANT--WITH POWER SUFFICIENT TO RAVAGE THE WORLD! WHO CAN SAY HOW MANY OTHERS EXIST THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
WE HAVE TO BE ABLE--AS A NATION AND, PERHAPS, A SPECIES--TO DEFEND OURSELVES!
GRANTED--BUT WHAT YOU PROPOSE WILL ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE. ROBERT, IT ISN'T THAT FAR REMOVED FROM LEGALIZED SLAVERY!
I RESPECT YOU AS A COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND, BUT I WON'T SUPPORT YOU ON THIS. INDEED, I'LL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STOP YOU.
YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE, PHILLIP.
ONE OF US IS, SENATOR.


FEDERAL BILL
S.1--The MUTANT AFFAIRS CONTROL ACT
Introduced this day, 23rd January 1984
in the Second Session
of the
98th Congress
by Senator Robert Kelly
I ONLY HOPE IT ISN'T IRREVOCABLE.
1
The Washingto
MUTANTS BA
DRAGON OVER
TOKYO
NEXT ISSUE: Love AND MADNESS!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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
ROMITA JR

Stan Lee PRESENTS
MADNESS
STARRING
ROGUE
OF THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
SONUVAGUN--
--AH'VE JUST FLOWN HALF-WAY 'ROUND THE WORLD !!!
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LOUISE JONES & ANN NOCENTI, EDITORS
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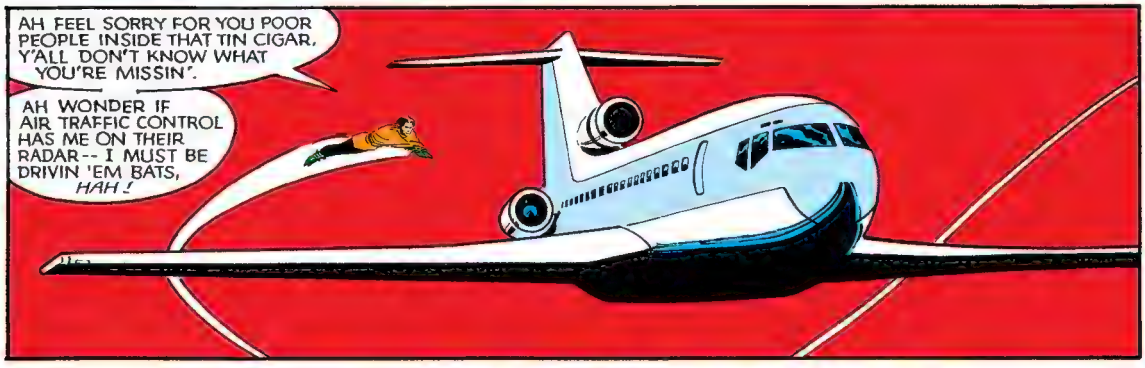
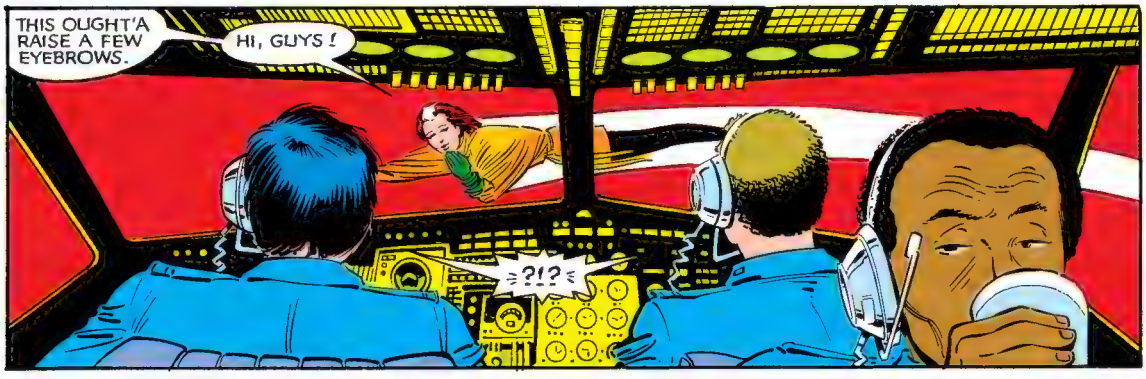
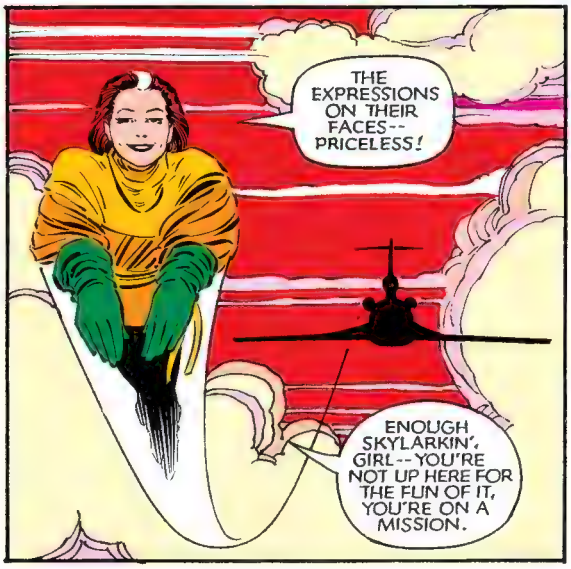
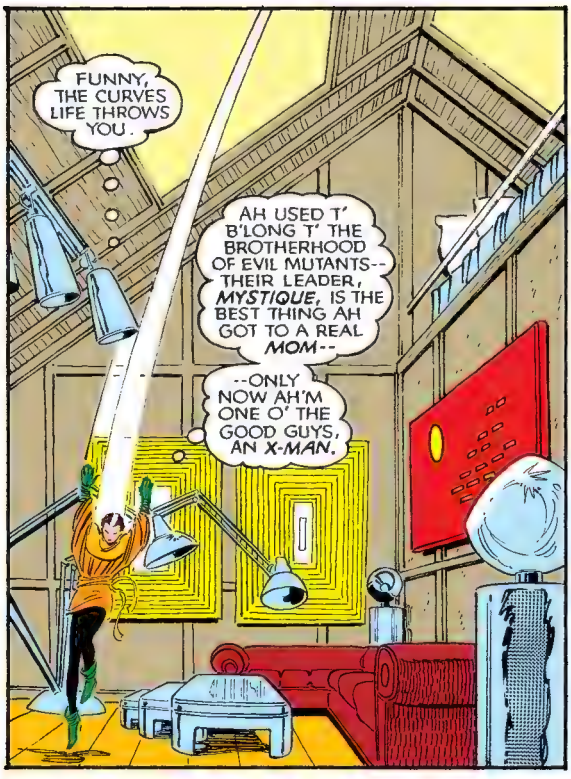
BOY, IT'S GREAT UP HERE!
AH THINK AH UNDERSTAND WHY ORORO LOVES FLYIN' SO MUCH -- THE BEAUTY, THE MAJESTY, THE... PEACE.
AH NEVER REALLY NOTICED B'FORE, AH NEVER TOOK THE TIME.

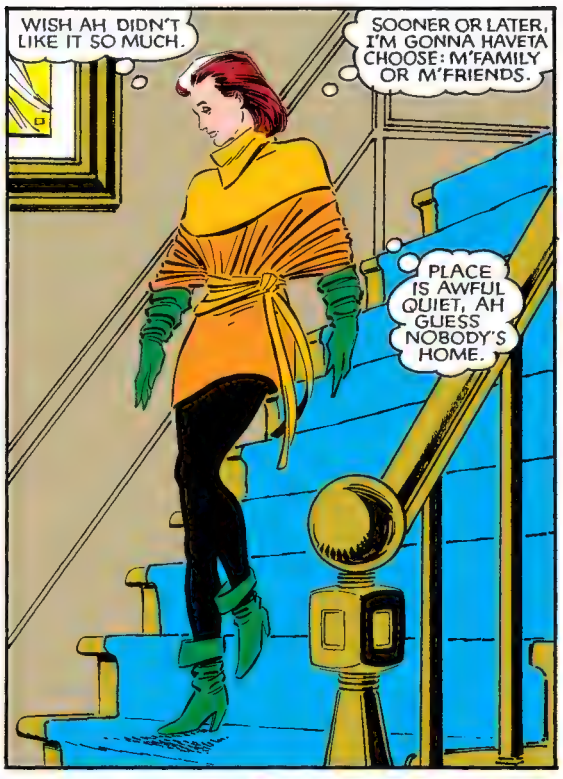

AH FEEL SORRY FOR YOU POOR PEOPLE INSIDE THAT TIN CIGAR, Y'ALL DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSIN'.
AH WONDER IF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL HAS ME ON THEIR RADAR -- I MUST BE DRIVIN 'EM BATS, HAH!

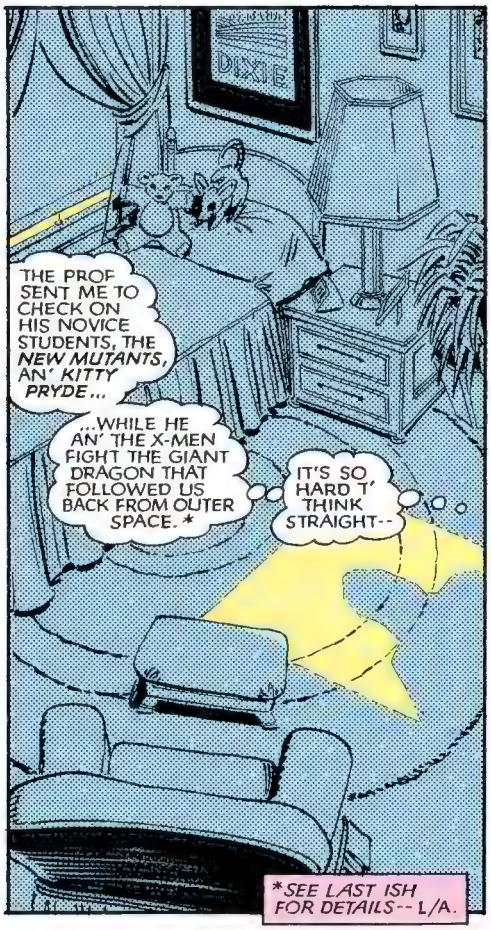

THIS OUGHT'A RAISE A FEW EYEBROWS.
HI, GUYS!
=?!?=

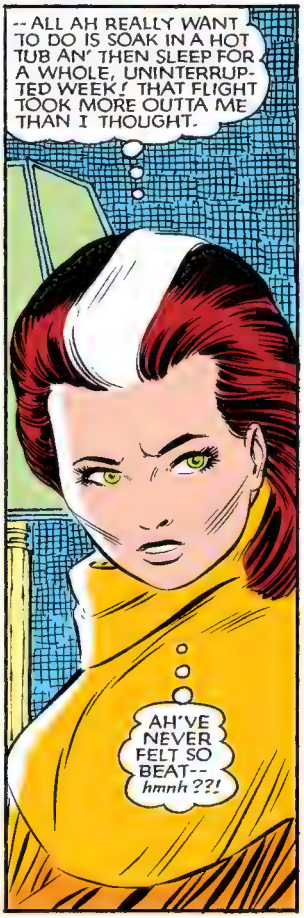

THE EXPRESSIONS ON THEIR FACES -- PRICELESS!
ENOUGH SKYLARKIN', GIRL -- YOU'RE NOT UP HERE FOR THE FUN OF IT, YOU'RE ON A MISSION.

HOME SWEET HOME -- AN' IN RECORD TIME, TOO!
AH DIDN'T KNOW AH HAD THAT KIND'A SPEED IN ME.
AH ALSO NEVER DREAMED AH'D CALL PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNG-STERS "HOME."

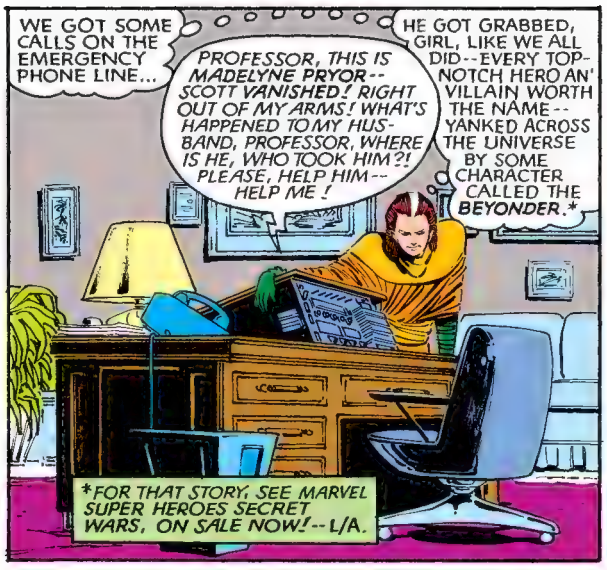

FUNNY, THE CURVES LIFE THROWS YOU.
AH USED T' B'LONG T' THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS--THEIR LEADER, MYSTIQUE, IS THE BEST THING AH GOT TO A REAL MOM--
--ONLY NOW AH'M ONE O' THE GOOD GUYS, AN X-MAN.

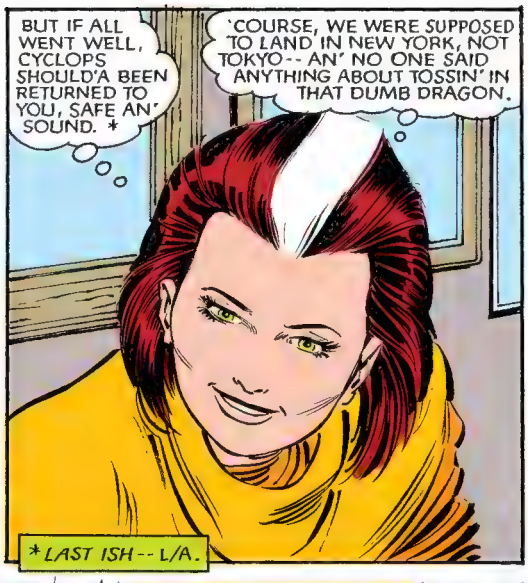

WISH AH DIDN'T LIKE IT SO MUCH.
SOONER OR LATER, I'M GONNA HAVETA CHOOSE: M'FAMILY OR M'FRIENDS.
PLACE IS AWFUL QUIET, AH GUESS NOBODY'S HOME.

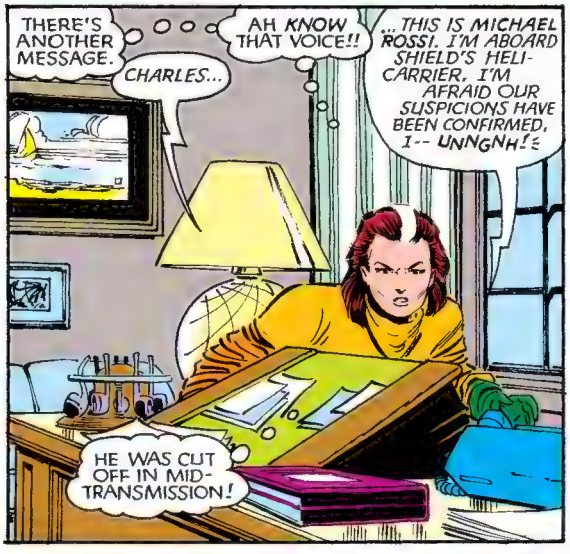

DIXIE
THE PROF SENT ME TO CHECK ON HIS NOVICE STUDENTS, THE NEW MUTANTS, AN' KITTY PRYDE...
...WHILE HE AN' THE X-MEN FIGHT THE GIANT DRAGON THAT FOLLOWED US BACK FROM OUTER SPACE.*
IT'S SO HARD T' THINK STRAIGHT--
*SEE LAST ISH FOR DETAILS-- L/A.


--ALL AH REALLY WANT TO DO IS SOAK IN A HOT TUB AN' THEN SLEEP FOR A WHOLE, UNINTERRUPTED WEEK! THAT FLIGHT TOOK MORE OUTTA ME THAN I THOUGHT.
AH'VE NEVER FELT SO BEAT--
hmnh ??!

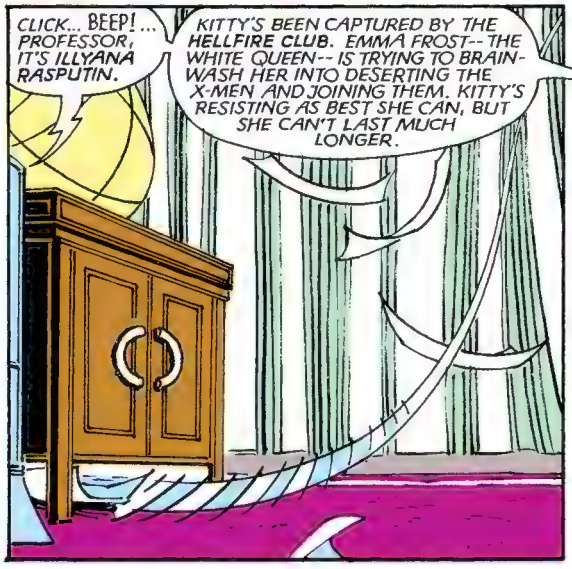
AH MUST BE RUNNIN' ON EMPTY, THE ALARM'S BEEN RINGIN' EVER SINCE AH CAME IN, BUT AH ONLY JUST REALIZED IT!
IT'S COMIN' FROM XAVIER'S STUDY!

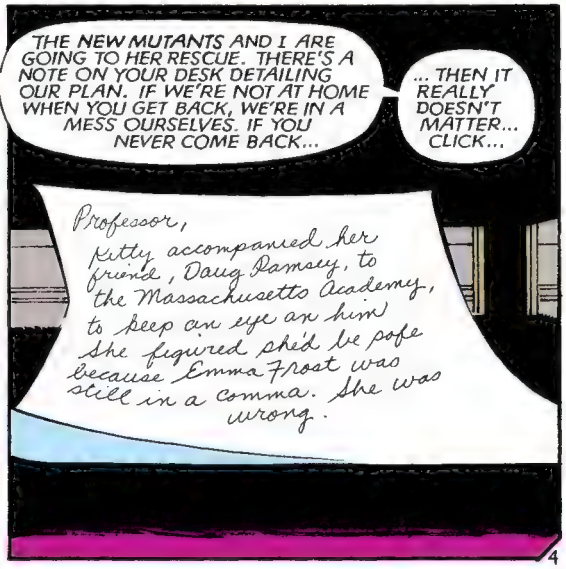

WE GOT SOME CALLS ON THE EMERGENCY PHONE LINE...
PROFESSOR, THIS IS MADELYNE PRYOR-- SCOTT VANISHED! RIGHT OUT OF MY ARMS! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO MY HUSBAND, PROFESSOR, WHERE IS HE, WHO TOOK HIM?! PLEASE, HELP HIM-- HELP ME!
HE GOT GRABBED, GIRL, LIKE WE ALL DID--EVERY TOP-NOTCH HERO AN' VILLAIN WORTH THE NAME-- YANKED ACROSS THE UNIVERSE BY SOME CHARACTER CALLED THE BEYONDER.*
*FOR THAT STORY, SEE MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS, ON SALE NOW!--L/A.

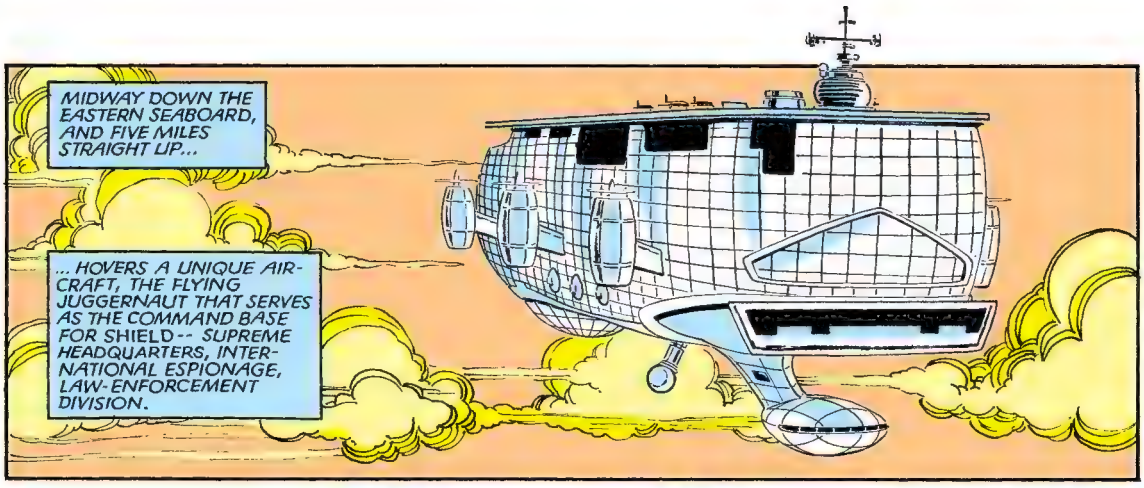

BUT IF ALL WENT WELL, CYCLOPS SHOULD'A BEEN RETURNED TO YOU, SAFE AN' SOUND. *
'COURSE, WE WERE SUPPOSED TO LAND IN NEW YORK, NOT TOKYO-- AN' NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT TOSSIN' IN THAT DUMB DRAGON.
*LAST ISH--L/A.


THERE'S ANOTHER MESSAGE.
CHARLES...
AH KNOW THAT VOICE!!
...THIS IS MICHAEL ROSSI. I'M ABOARD SHIELD'S HELI-CARRIER. I'M AFRAID OUR SUSPICIONS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED, I-- UNNGNH!
HE WAS CUT OFF IN MID-TRANSMISSION!

HE'S IN TROUBLE!

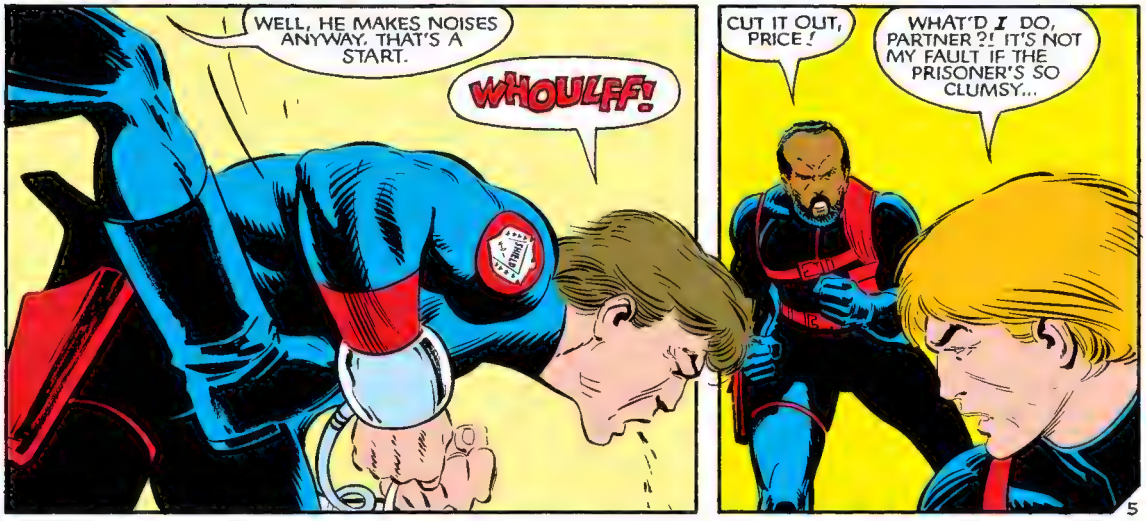

CLICK... BEEP!... PROFESSOR, IT'S ILLYANA RASPUTIN.
KITTY'S BEEN CAPTURED BY THE HELLFIRE CLUB. EMMA FROST-- THE WHITE QUEEN-- IS TRYING TO BRAIN-WASH HER INTO DESERTING THE X-MEN AND JOINING THEM. KITTY'S RESISTING AS BEST SHE CAN, BUT SHE CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER.

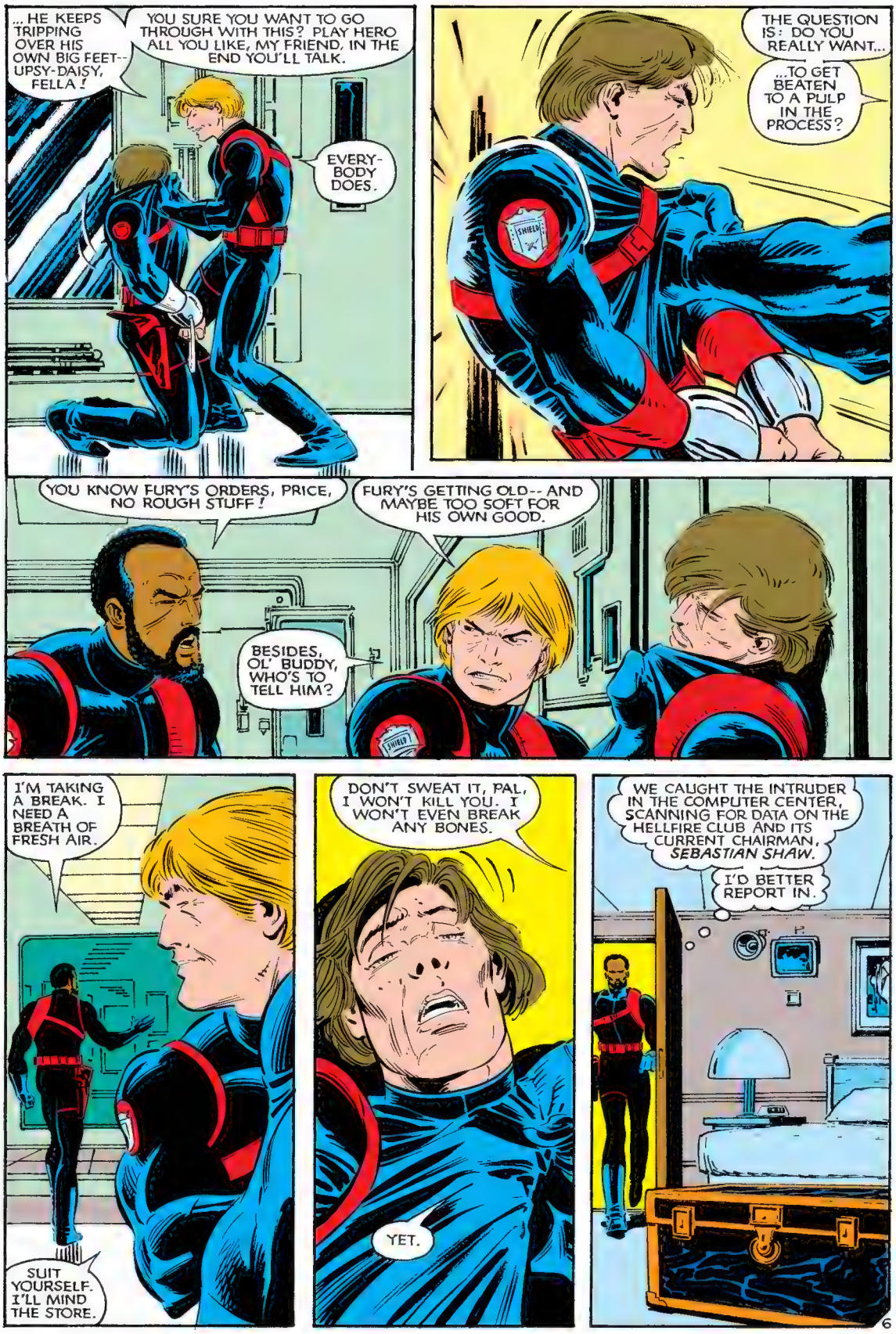

THE NEW MUTANTS AND I ARE GOING TO HER RESCUE. THERE'S A NOTE ON YOUR DESK DETAILING OUR PLAN. IF WE'RE NOT AT HOME WHEN YOU GET BACK, WE'RE IN A MESS OURSELVES. IF YOU NEVER COME BACK...
...THEN IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER... CLICK...
Professor,
Kitty accompanied her friend, Doug Ramsey, to the Massachusetts Academy, to keep an eye on him. She figured she'd be safe because Emma Frost was still in a comma. She was wrong.

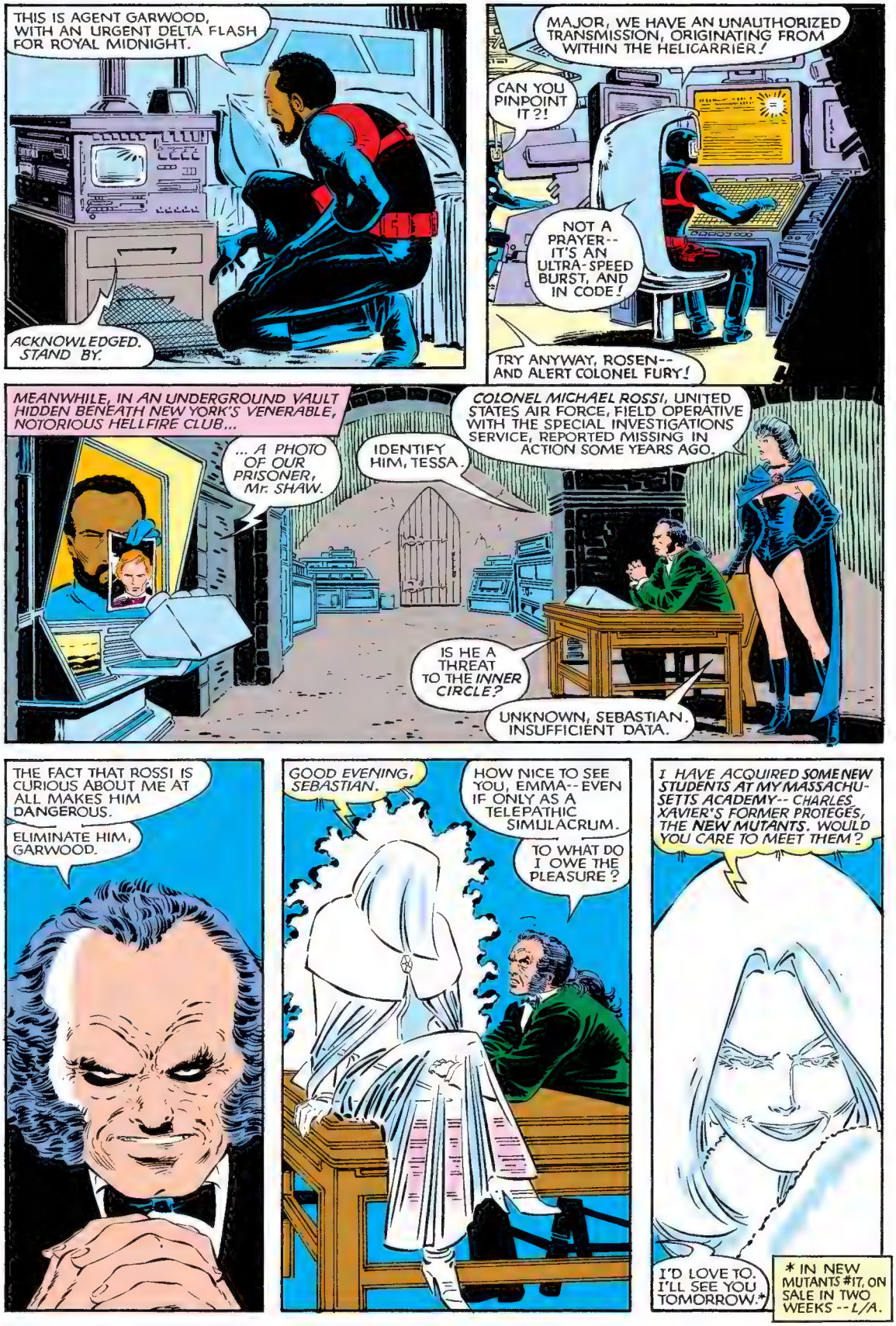

MIDWAY DOWN THE EASTERN SEABOARD, AND FIVE MILES STRAIGHT UP...
.. HOVERS A UNIQUE AIR-CRAFT, THE FLYING JUGGERNAUT THAT SERVES AS THE COMMAND BASE FOR SHIELD -- SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, INTER-NATIONAL ESPIONAGE, LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION.

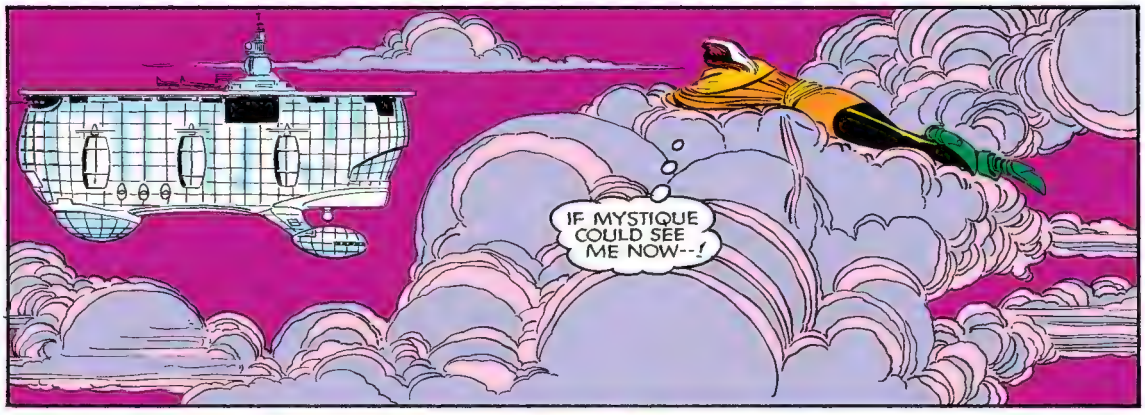
AND, ON ITS DETENTION DECK...
ONCE MORE, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?!
THE MAN IS STUBBORN.

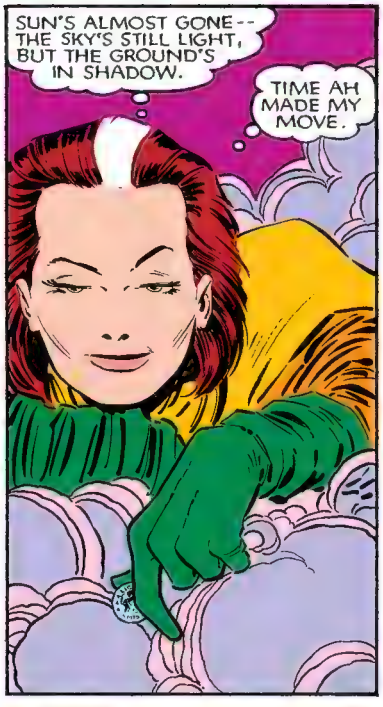
WE'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR DAYS AND HE HASN'T SAID A WORD. HEY, PAUL, YOU THINK HE'S MUTE?
OUARRGH!!


WELL, HE MAKES NOISES ANYWAY. THAT'S A START.
WHOULFF!
CUT IT OUT, PRICE!
WHAT'D I DO, PARTNER?! IT'S NOT MY FAULT IF THE PRISONER'S SO CLUMSY...

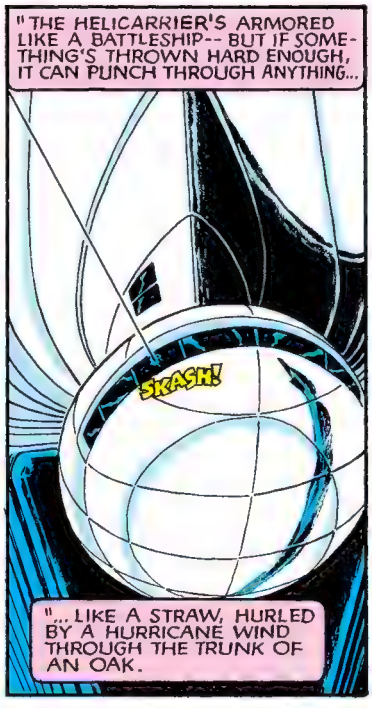

... HE KEEPS TRIPPING OVER HIS OWN BIG FEET-- UPSY-DAISY, FELLA!
YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS? PLAY HERO ALL YOU LIKE, MY FRIEND, IN THE END YOU'LL TALK.
EVERY-BODY DOES.
THE QUESTION IS: DO YOU REALLY WANT...
...TO GET BEATEN TO A PULP IN THE PROCESS?
YOU KNOW FURY'S ORDERS, PRICE, NO ROUGH STUFF!
FURY'S GETTING OLD-- AND MAYBE TOO SOFT FOR HIS OWN GOOD.
BESIDES, OL' BUDDY, WHO'S TO TELL HIM?
I'M TAKING A BREAK. I NEED A BREATH OF FRESH AIR.
SUIT YOURSELF. I'LL MIND THE STORE.
DON'T SWEAT IT, PAL, I WON'T KILL YOU. I WON'T EVEN BREAK ANY BONES.
YET.
WE CAUGHT THE INTRUDER IN THE COMPUTER CENTER, SCANNING FOR DATA ON THE HELLFIRE CLUB AND ITS CURRENT CHAIRMAN, SEBASTIAN SHAW.
I'D BETTER REPORT IN.

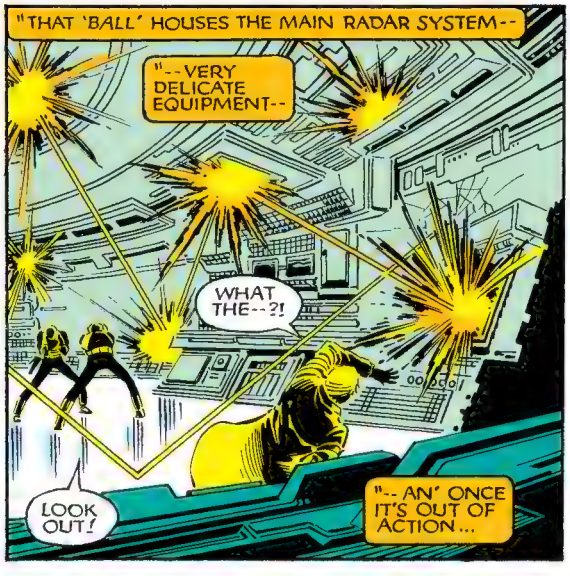

THIS IS AGENT GARWOOD, WITH AN URGENT DELTA FLASH FOR ROYAL MIDNIGHT.
ACKNOWLEDGED. STAND BY.
MAJOR, WE HAVE AN UNAUTHORIZED TRANSMISSION, ORIGINATING FROM WITHIN THE HELICARRIER!
CAN YOU PINPOINT IT?!
NOT A PRAYER-- IT'S AN ULTRA-SPEED BURST, AND IN CODE!
TRY ANYWAY, ROSEN-- AND ALERT COLONEL FURY!
MEANWHILE, IN AN UNDERGROUND VAULT HIDDEN BENEATH NEW YORK'S VENERABLE, NOTORIOUS HELLFIRE CLUB...
... A PHOTO OF OUR PRISONER, Mr. SHAW.
IDENTIFY HIM, TESSA.
COLONEL MICHAEL ROSSI, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, FIELD OPERATIVE WITH THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS SERVICE, REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SOME YEARS AGO.
IS HE A THREAT TO THE INNER CIRCLE?
UNKNOWN, SEBASTIAN. INSUFFICIENT DATA.
THE FACT THAT ROSSI IS CURIOUS ABOUT ME AT ALL MAKES HIM DANGEROUS.
ELIMINATE HIM, GARWOOD.
GOOD EVENING, SEBASTIAN.
HOW NICE TO SEE YOU, EMMA-- EVEN IF ONLY AS A TELEPATHIC SIMULACRUM.
TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE?
I HAVE ACQUIRED SOME NEW STUDENTS AT MY MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY-- CHARLES XAVIER'S FORMER PROTEGES, THE NEW MUTANTS. WOULD YOU CARE TO MEET THEM?
I'D LOVE TO. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.*
* IN NEW MUTANTS #17, ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS -- L/A.


IF MYSTIQUE COULD SEE ME NOW--!

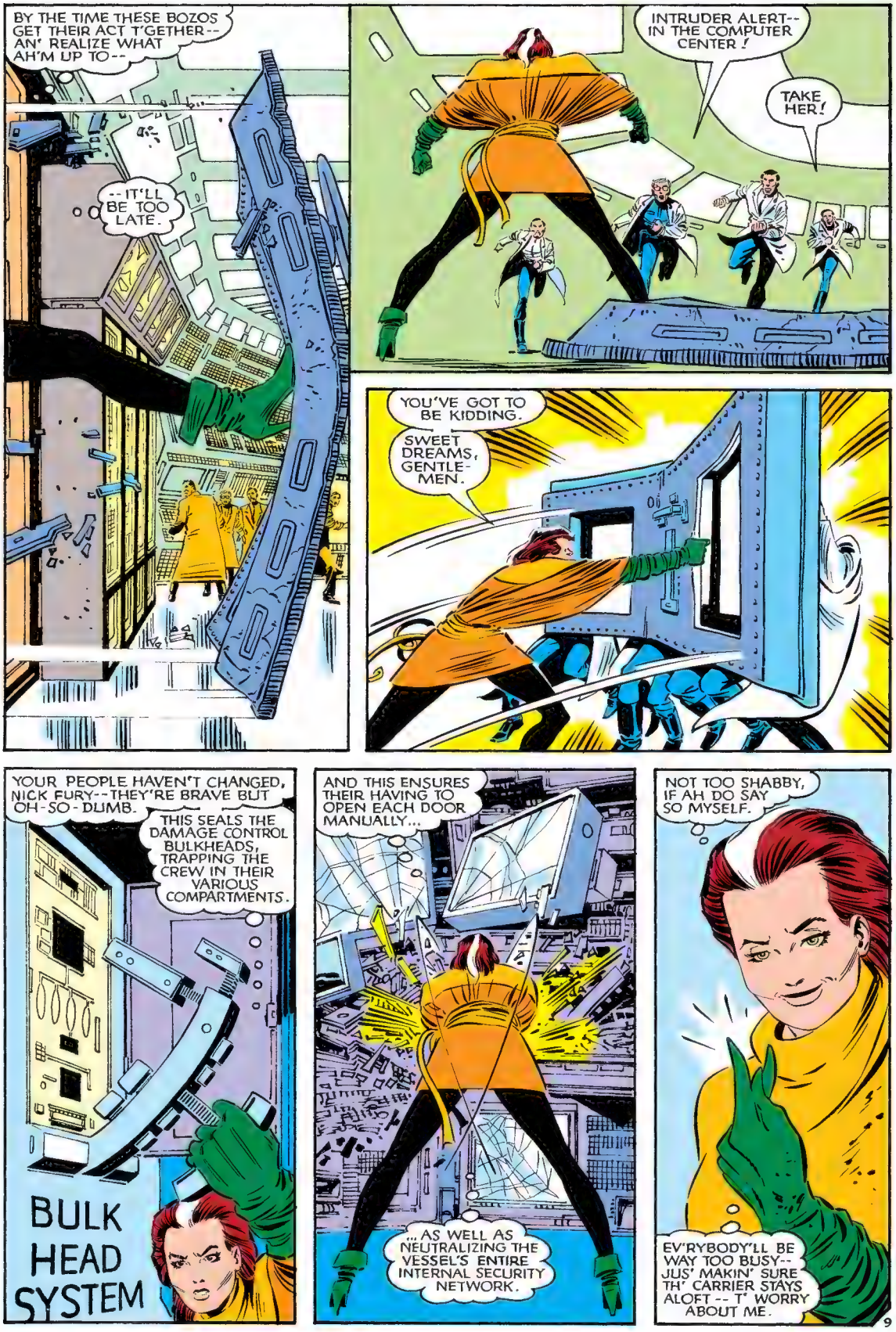

SUN'S ALMOST GONE-- THE SKY'S STILL LIGHT, BUT THE GROUND'S IN SHADOW.
TIME AH MADE MY MOVE.

"SUZY B"-- DO YOUR STUFF!


"THE HELICARRIER'S ARMORED LIKE A BATTLESHIP-- BUT IF SOMETHING'S THROWN HARD ENOUGH, IT CAN PUNCH THROUGH ANYTHING...
SKASH!
"...LIKE A STRAW, HURLED BY A HURRICANE WIND THROUGH THE TRUNK OF AN OAK.


"THAT 'BALL' HOUSES THE MAIN RADAR SYSTEM--
"--VERY DELICATE EQUIPMENT--
WHAT THE--?!
LOOK OUT!
"--AN' ONCE IT'S OUT OF ACTION...

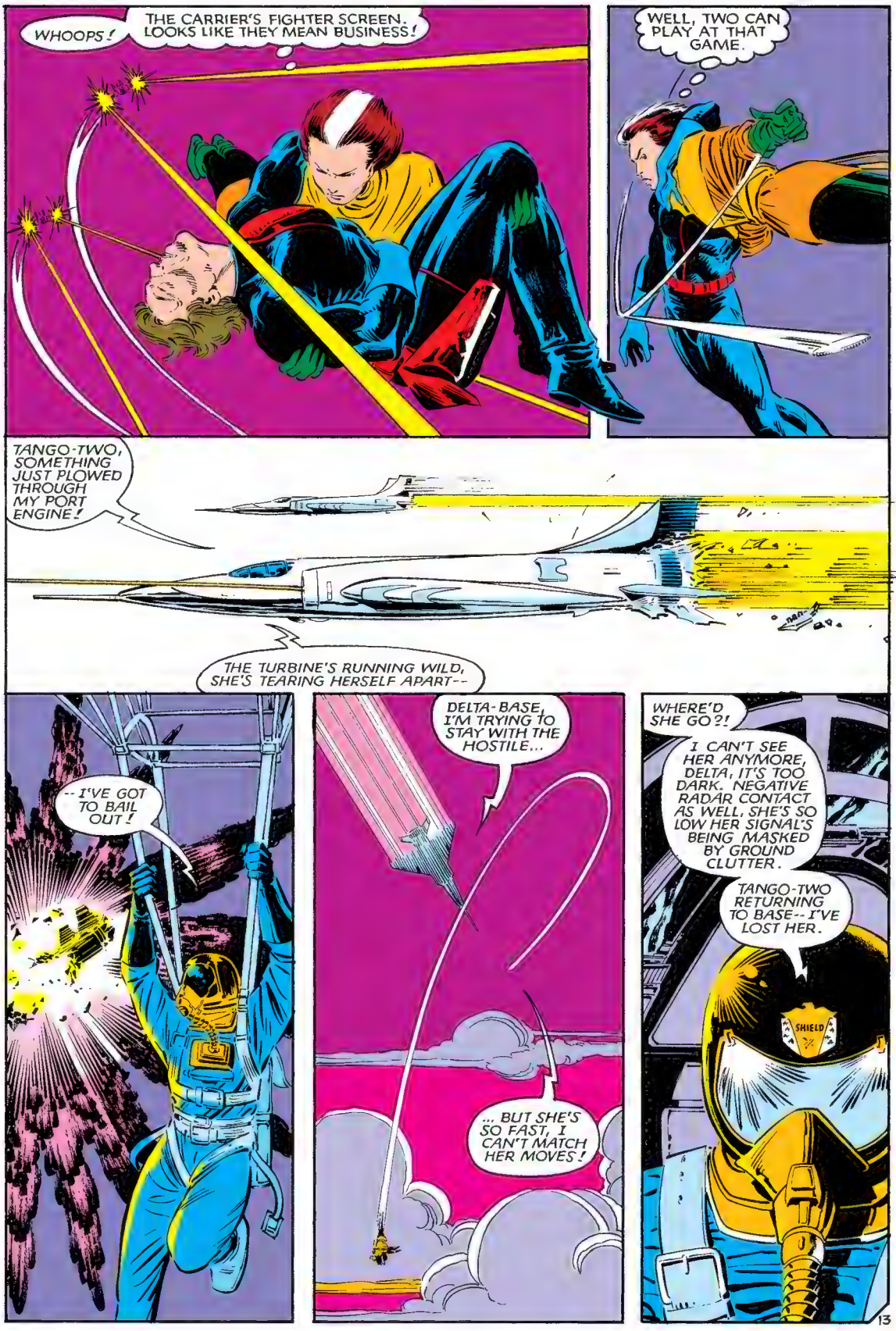
...THIS TUB'LL BE VIRTUALLY BLIND.
IN ALL THE CONFUSION, WHO'S THEN T' NOTICE ME SLIPPIN' ABOARD?

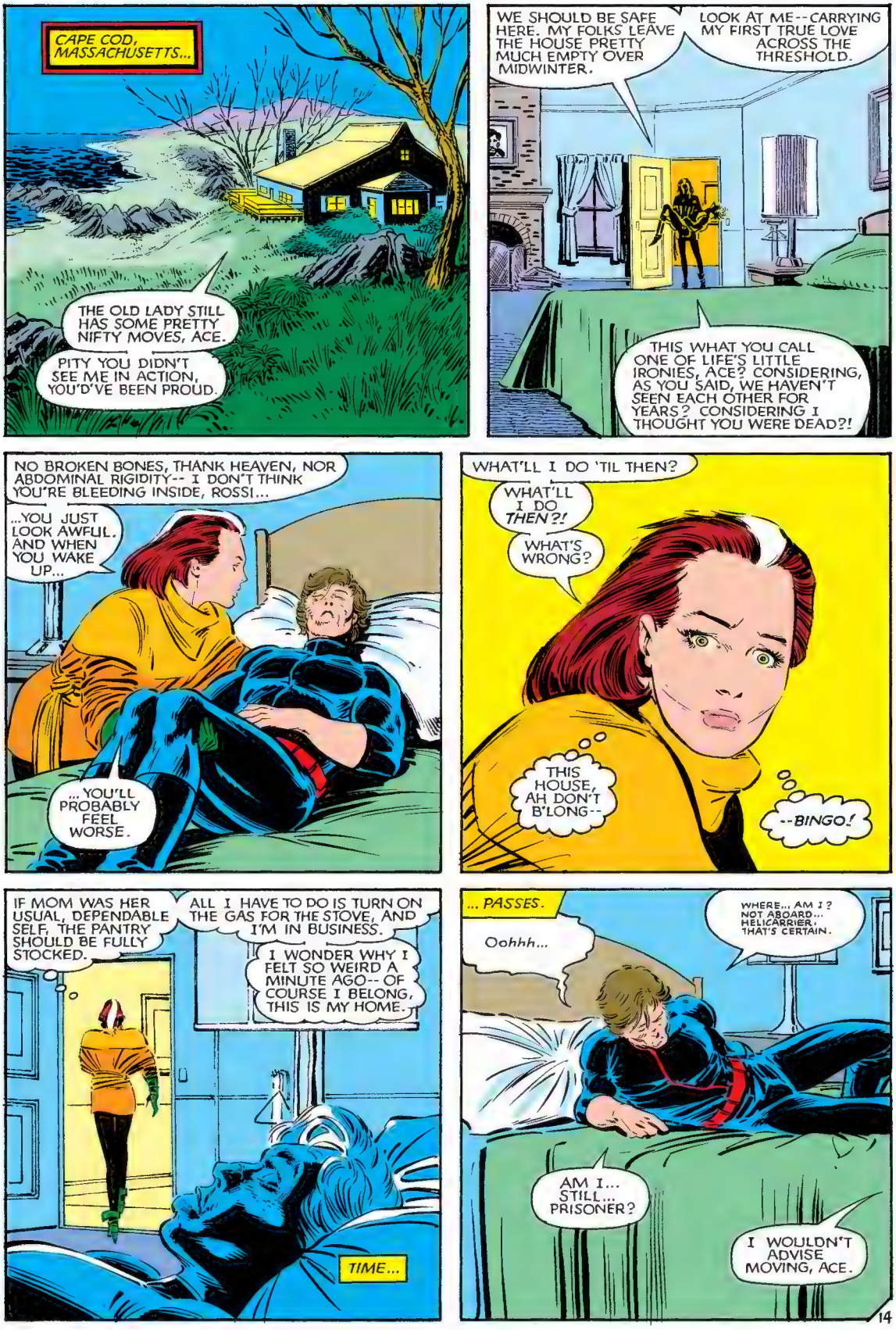

BY THE TIME THESE BOZOS GET THEIR ACT T'GETHER-- AN' REALIZE WHAT AH'M UP TO--
--IT'LL BE TOO LATE.
INTRUDER ALERT-- IN THE COMPUTER CENTER!
TAKE HER!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
SWEET DREAMS, GENTLE-MEN.
YOUR PEOPLE HAVEN'T CHANGED, NICK FURY--THEY'RE BRAVE BUT OH-SO-DUMB.
THIS SEALS THE DAMAGE CONTROL BULKHEADS, TRAPPING THE CREW IN THEIR VARIOUS COMPARTMENTS.
BULK HEAD SYSTEM
AND THIS ENSURES THEIR HAVING TO OPEN EACH DOOR MANUALLY...
...AS WELL AS NEUTRALIZING THE VESSEL'S ENTIRE INTERNAL SECURITY NETWORK.
NOT TOO SHABBY, IF AH DO SAY SO MYSELF.
EV'RYBODY'LL BE WAY TOO BUSY-- JUS' MAKIN' SURE TH' CARRIER STAYS ALOFT -- T' WORRY ABOUT ME.

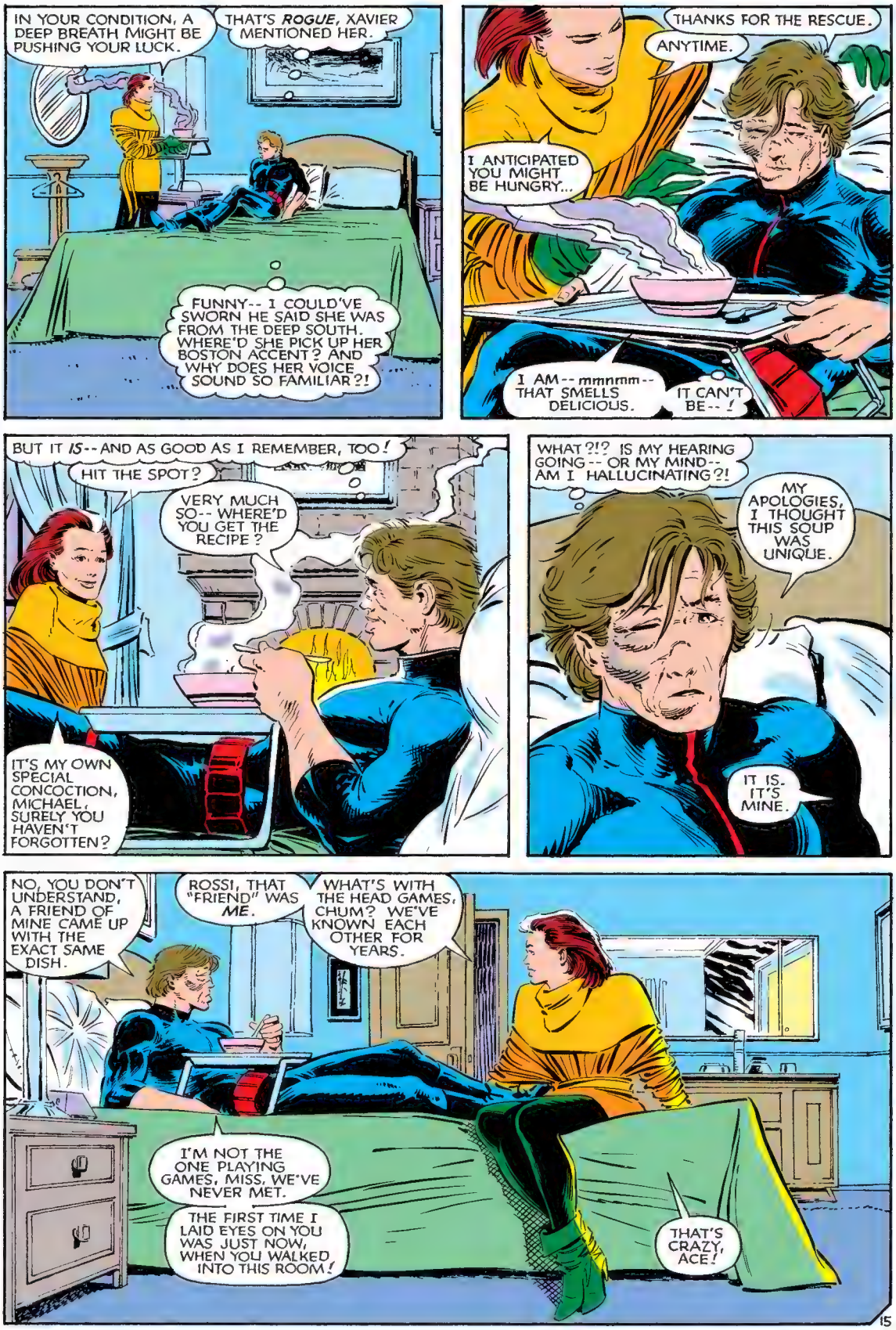
"...AN' MY LI'L JAIL-BREAK."
THE "BLAST DOORS" HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED!
THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A DRILL, ARE WE UNDER ATTACK?!
PERHAPS I CAN TURN THAT TO MY ADVANTAGE.
YO, PAUL-- WHAT'S THE STORY?! WHY THE ALARMS?!
BEATS ME, PRICE. HOW'S THE PRISONER?
CLUMSY AS EVER, PARTNER.
GIMME A HAND GETTING HIM BACK INTO HIS CELL, WILLYA...
BAM!
MY APOLOGIES, PRICE, I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU AND THE GOOD COLONEL HERE.
HE OVERPOWERED YOU, GRABBED YOUR GUN AND SHOT YOU DEAD.
I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL HIM.
TO SATISFY BALLISTICS, I'LL PUT MY WEAPON IN ROSSI'S HAND, AND TAKE YOURS FOR MYSELF. NO ONE'LL BE THE WISER.
PARDON ME, SUGAR...

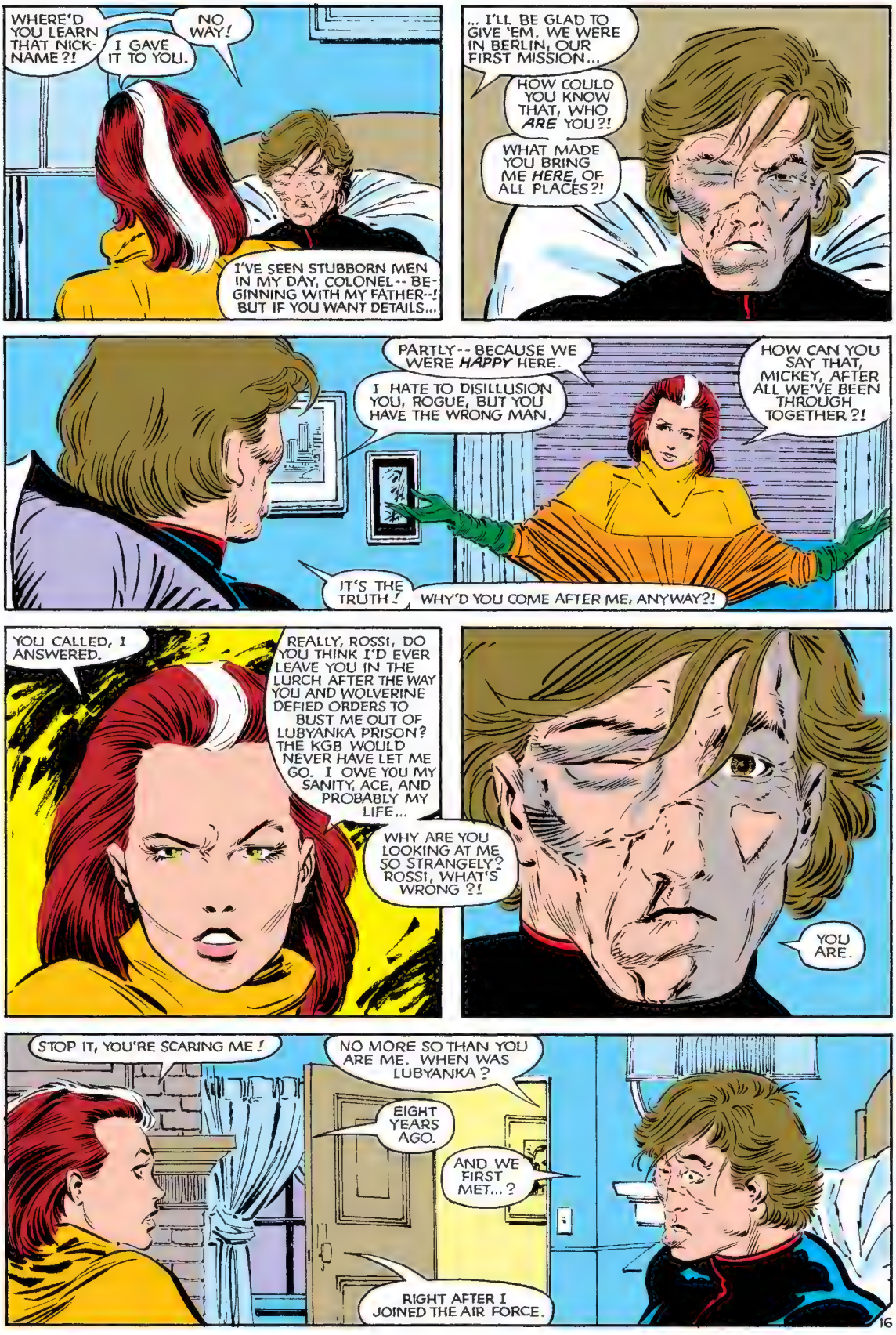
WHAT--?! WHO?!?
...OHGOLLYGEE, AM AH INTERRUPTING?
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
Y'SEE, COLONEL ROSSI'S A FRIEND O' MINE.
AH'M AFRAID AH REALLY CAN'T LET YOU SHOOT HIM.
HOW'RE YOU GOING TO STOP ME?!
POWPOWPOWPOWPOW
AH'D ADVISE SURRENDER, HON, 'FORE ONE OF US GETS HURT.
SHE'S INVULNERABLE--BUT I'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE TO FINISH ROSSI!
YARRGH!
FORGET IT, FELLA!
JUS' BE GRATEFUL MY PUNCH DOESN'T TAKE YOUR HEAD CLEAN OFF!
=UNNNGNH!=

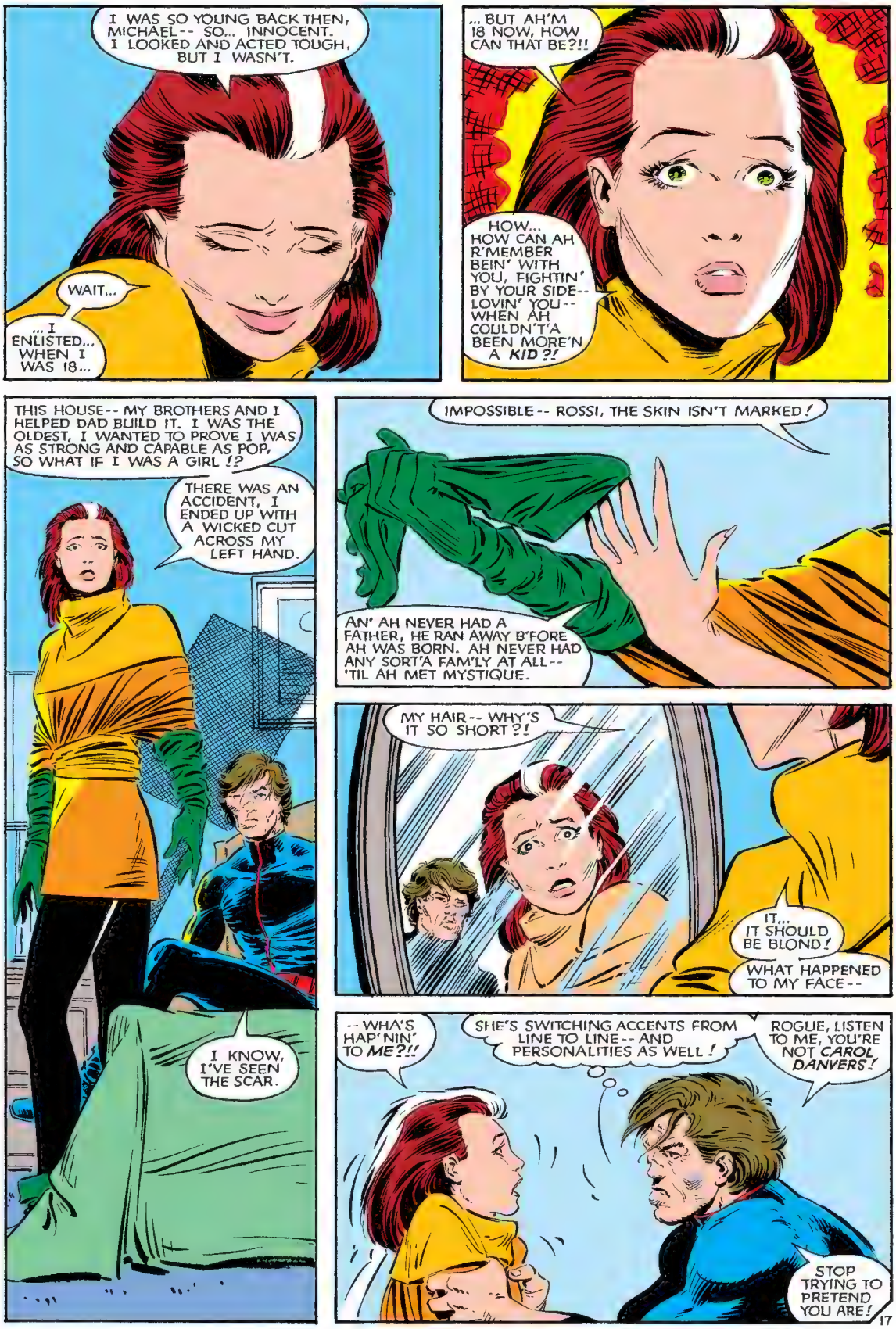
COLONEL-- MICKEY!
THEY... THEY DID A ROYAL NUMBER ON YOU, DIDN'T THEY, ACE? NOT TO WORRY, THOUGH, YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS, THE BEST! I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU...
...THE WAY YOU ALWAYS DID OF ME.
THAT VOICE...
...CAN'T BE... THOUGHT... NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN ...
ME AND THE BAD PENNY, LOVER, FOREVER POPPING UP WHERE AND WHEN LEAST EXPECTED.
BLAST, HE'S UNCONSCIOUS.
HE MAY HAVE INTERNAL INJURIES.
I HAVE TO FIND A PLACE TO GO TO GROUND-- AND I CAN GIVE HIM A PROPER EXAMINATION.
NO POINT IN BEING SUBTLE. SHIELD KNOWS I'M HERE, I MAY AS WELL LEAVE BY THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE.
WHAT WAS ROSSI'S MISSION? HE WAS WORKING WITH XAVIER-- BUT WAS IT OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED? AND WHY THE ROUGH STUFF FROM THOSE SHIELD OPERATIVES-- ONE OF THEM HAD MURDERED ANOTHER AND WAS ABOUT TO EXECUTE HIM-- WAS THE KILLER A "MOLE"? IF SO, WHO WAS HE WORKING FOR?!
DELTA BASE FROM TANGO LEADER, WE HAVE INTRUDER CONTACT ON OUR 'SCOPES...
...VECTORING AWAY FROM THE HELICARRIER.
TANGO FLIGHT, CONTACT IS CONFIRMED HOSTILE.
YOUR ORDERS ARE TO INTERCEPT-- AND DESTROY!

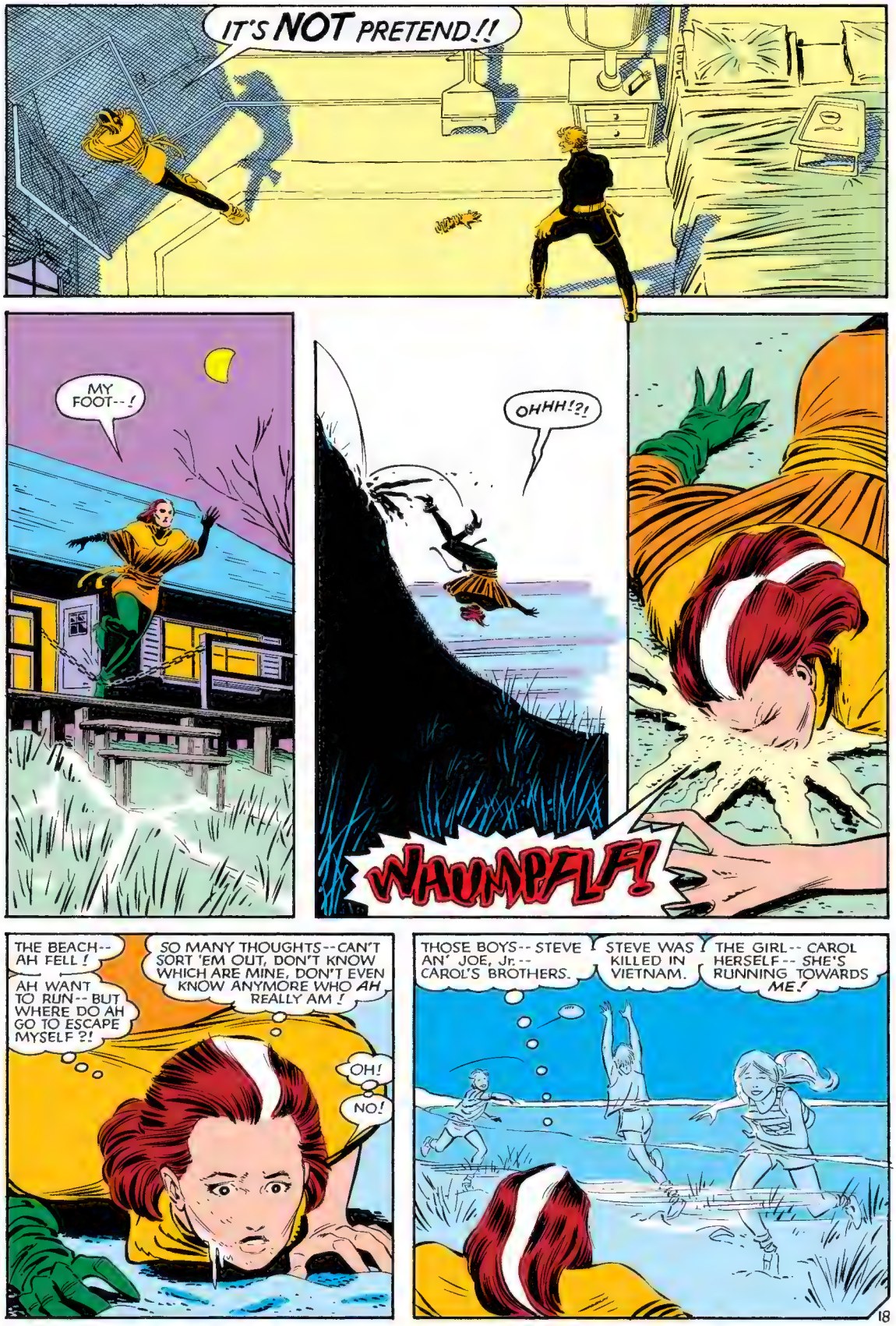

WHOOPS!
THE CARRIER'S FIGHTER SCREEN. LOOKS LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS!
WELL, TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME.
TANGO-TWO, SOMETHING JUST PLOWED THROUGH MY PORT ENGINE!
THE TURBINE'S RUNNING WILD, SHE'S TEARING HERSELF APART--
-- I'VE GOT TO BAIL OUT!
DELTA-BASE, I'M TRYING TO STAY WITH THE HOSTILE...
... BUT SHE'S SO FAST, I CAN'T MATCH HER MOVES!
WHERE'D SHE GO?!
I CAN'T SEE HER ANYMORE, DELTA, IT'S TOO DARK. NEGATIVE RADAR CONTACT AS WELL, SHE'S SO LOW HER SIGNAL'S BEING MASKED BY GROUND CLUTTER.
TANGO-TWO RETURNING TO BASE-- I'VE LOST HER.
SHIELD

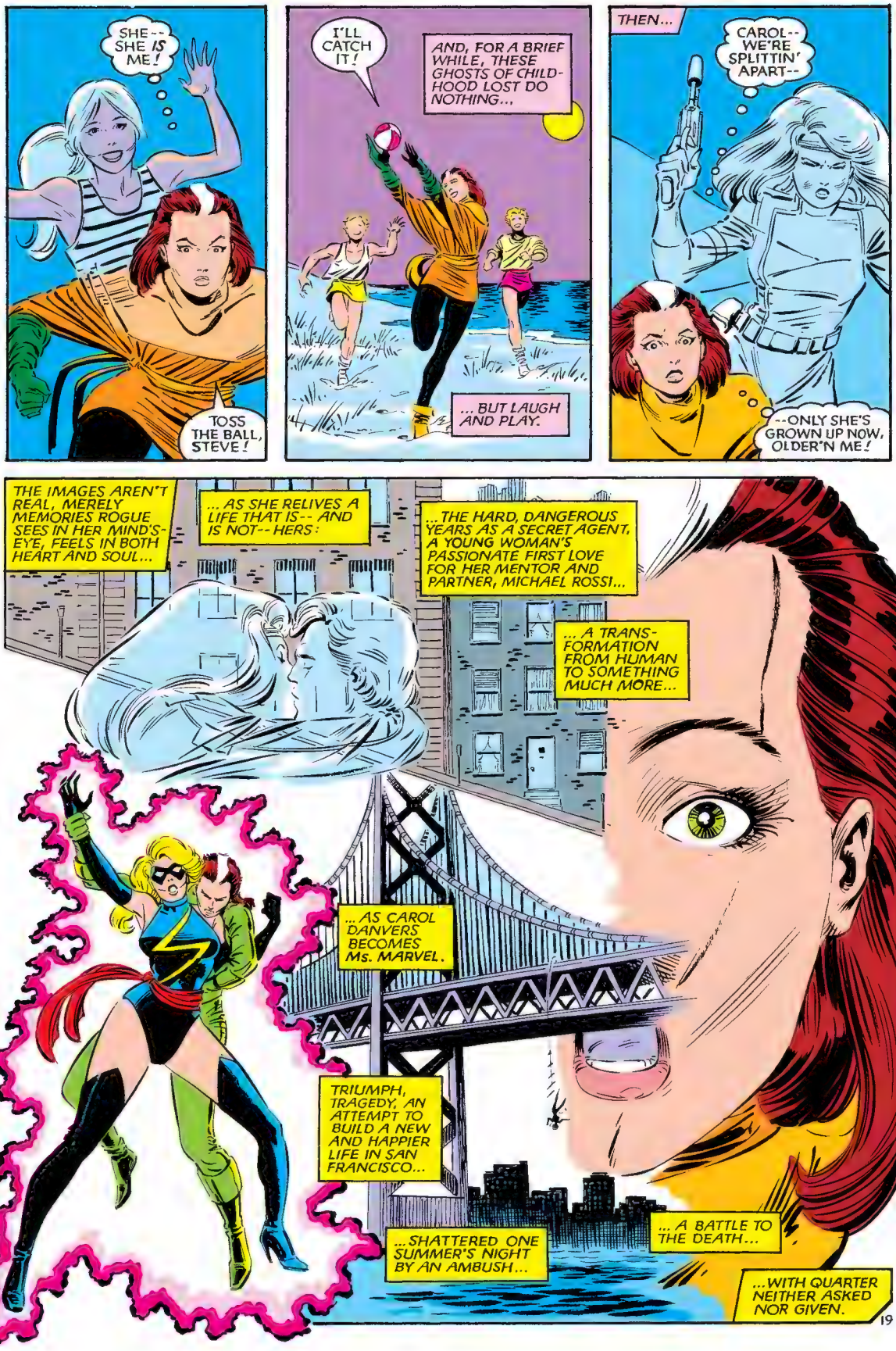

CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS...
THE OLD LADY STILL HAS SOME PRETTY NIFTY MOVES, ACE.
PITY YOU DIDN'T SEE ME IN ACTION, YOU'D'VE BEEN PROUD.
WE SHOULD BE SAFE HERE. MY FOLKS LEAVE THE HOUSE PRETTY MUCH EMPTY OVER MIDWINTER.
LOOK AT ME--CARRYING MY FIRST TRUE LOVE ACROSS THE THRESHOLD.
THIS WHAT YOU CALL ONE OF LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES, ACE? CONSIDERING, AS YOU SAID, WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS? CONSIDERING I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD?!
NO BROKEN BONES, THANK HEAVEN, NOR ABDOMINAL RIGIDITY-- I DON'T THINK YOU'RE BLEEDING INSIDE, ROSSI...
...YOU JUST LOOK AWFUL. AND WHEN YOU WAKE UP...
... YOU'LL PROBABLY FEEL WORSE.
WHAT'LL I DO 'TIL THEN?
WHAT'LL I DO THEN?!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THIS HOUSE, AH DON'T B'LONG--
--BINGO!
IF MOM WAS HER USUAL, DEPENDABLE SELF, THE PANTRY SHOULD BE FULLY STOCKED.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TURN ON THE GAS FOR THE STOVE, AND I'M IN BUSINESS.
I WONDER WHY I FELT SO WEIRD A MINUTE AGO-- OF COURSE I BELONG, THIS IS MY HOME.
TIME...
... PASSES.
Oohhh...
WHERE... AM I? NOT ABOARD... HELICARRIER. THAT'S CERTAIN.
AM I... STILL... PRISONER?
I WOULDN'T ADVISE MOVING, ACE.

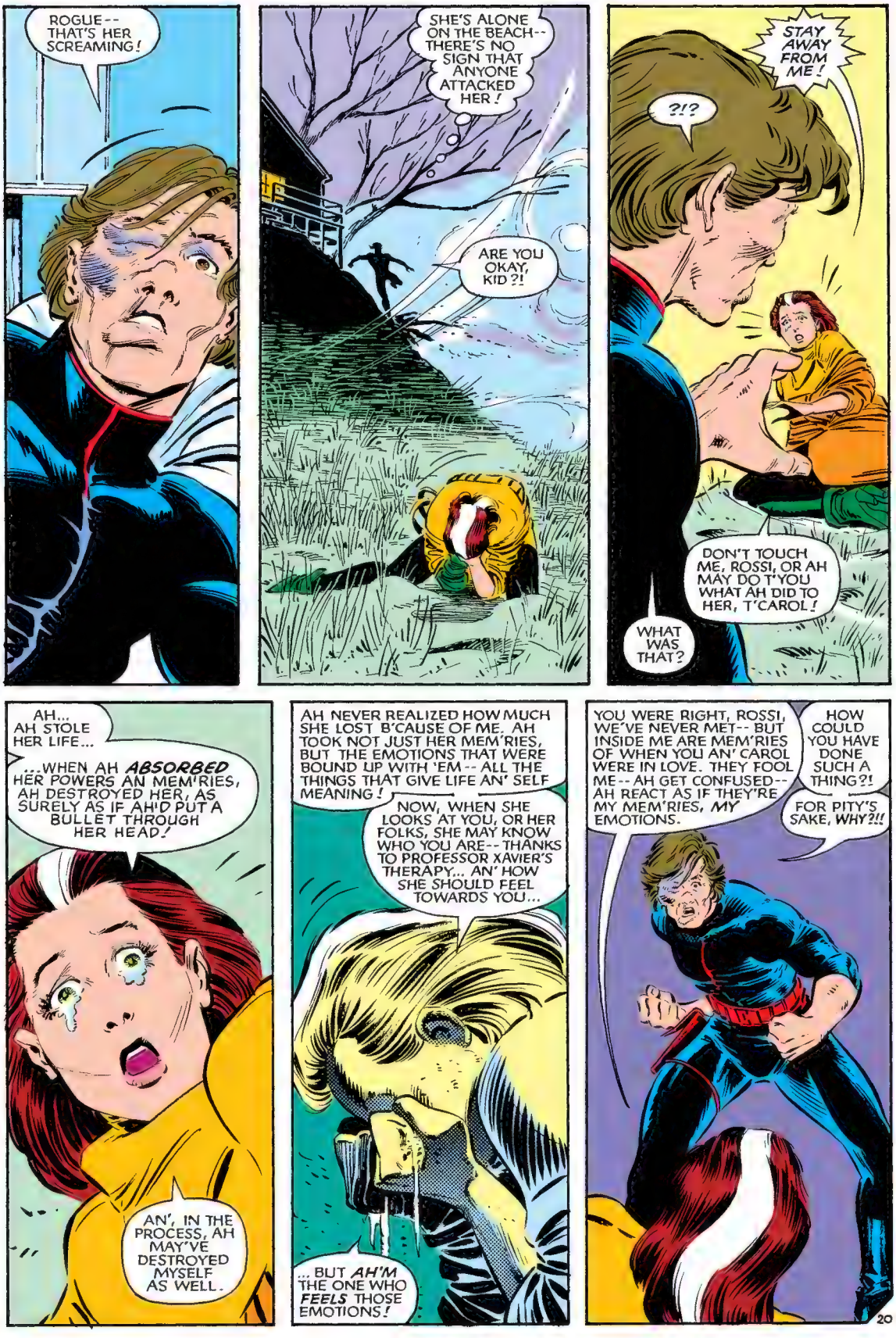

IN YOUR CONDITION, A DEEP BREATH MIGHT BE PUSHING YOUR LUCK.
THAT'S ROGUE, XAVIER MENTIONED HER.
FUNNY-- I COULD'VE SWORN HE SAID SHE WAS FROM THE DEEP SOUTH. WHERE'D SHE PICK UP HER BOSTON ACCENT? AND WHY DOES HER VOICE SOUND SO FAMILIAR?!
THANKS FOR THE RESCUE.
ANYTIME.
I ANTICIPATED YOU MIGHT BE HUNGRY...
I AM-- mmmmm-- THAT SMELLS DELICIOUS.
IT CAN'T BE-- !
BUT IT IS-- AND AS GOOD AS I REMEMBER, TOO!
HIT THE SPOT?
VERY MUCH SO-- WHERE'D YOU GET THE RECIPE?
IT'S MY OWN SPECIAL CONCOCTION, MICHAEL. SURELY YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN?
WHAT?!? IS MY HEARING GOING-- OR MY MIND-- AM I HALLUCINATING?!
MY APOLOGIES, I THOUGHT THIS SOUP WAS UNIQUE.
IT IS. IT'S MINE.
NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, A FRIEND OF MINE CAME UP WITH THE EXACT SAME DISH.
ROSSI, THAT "FRIEND" WAS ME.
WHAT'S WITH THE HEAD GAMES, CHUM? WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS.
I'M NOT THE ONE PLAYING GAMES, MISS, WE'VE NEVER MET.
THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON YOU WAS JUST NOW, WHEN YOU WALKED INTO THIS ROOM!
THAT'S CRAZY, ACE!

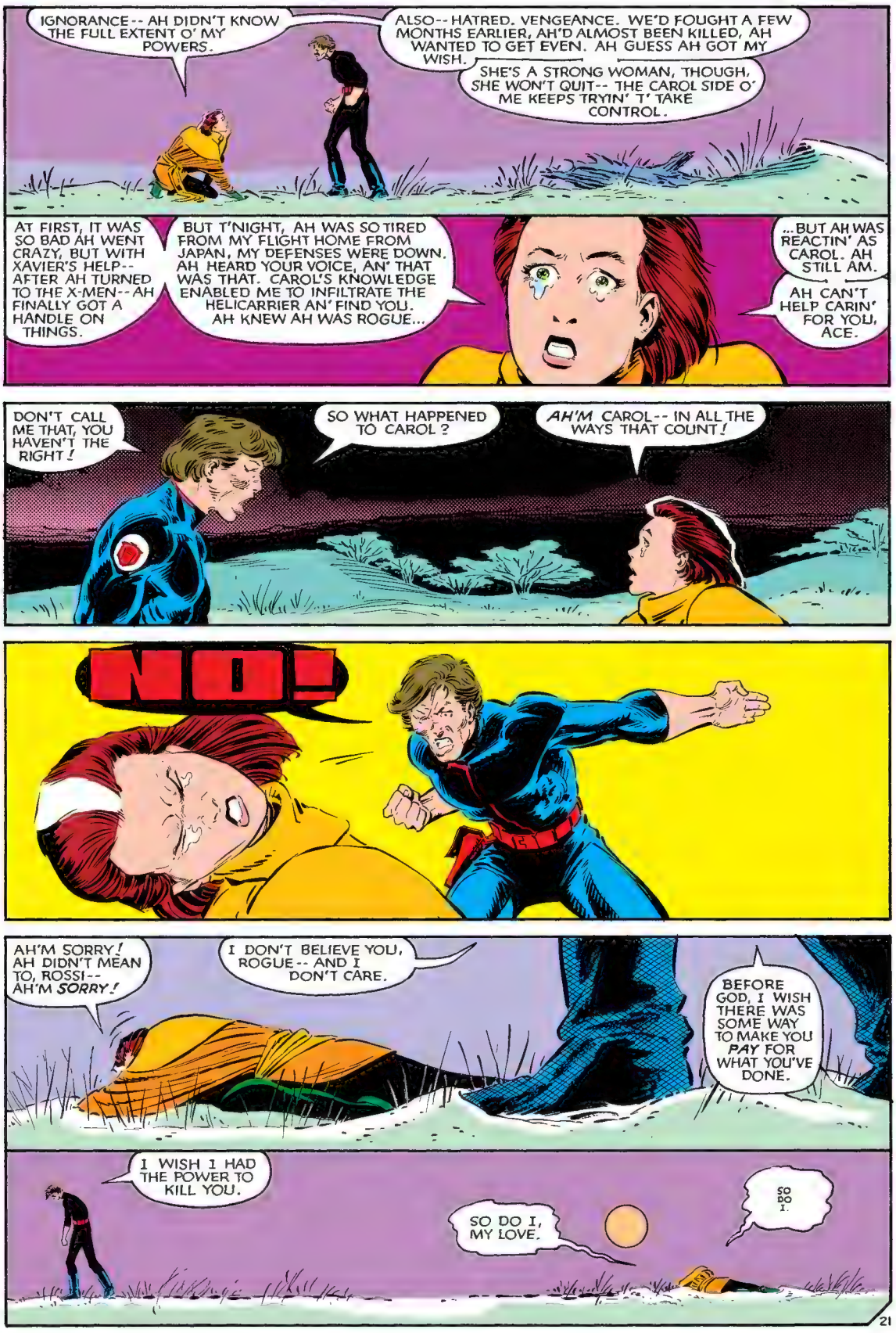

WHERE'D YOU LEARN THAT NICK-NAME?!
I GAVE IT TO YOU.
NO WAY!
I'VE SEEN STUBBORN MEN IN MY DAY, COLONEL-- BEGINNING WITH MY FATHER--! BUT IF YOU WANT DETAILS...
... I'LL BE GLAD TO GIVE 'EM. WE WERE IN BERLIN, OUR FIRST MISSION...
HOW COULD YOU KNOW THAT, WHO *ARE* YOU?!
WHAT MADE YOU BRING ME *HERE*, OF ALL PLACES?!
PARTLY-- BECAUSE WE WERE *HAPPY* HERE.
I HATE TO DISILLUSION YOU, ROGUE, BUT YOU HAVE THE WRONG MAN.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT, MICKEY, AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TOGETHER?!
IT'S THE TRUTH!
WHY'D YOU COME AFTER ME, ANYWAY?!
YOU CALLED, I ANSWERED.
REALLY, ROSSI, DO YOU THINK I'D EVER LEAVE YOU IN THE LURCH AFTER THE WAY YOU AND WOLVERINE DEFIED ORDERS TO BUST ME OUT OF LUBYANKA PRISON? THE KGB WOULD NEVER HAVE LET ME GO. I OWE YOU MY SANITY, ACE, AND PROBABLY MY LIFE...
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME SO STRANGELY? ROSSI, WHAT'S WRONG?!
YOU ARE.
STOP IT, YOU'RE SCARING ME!
NO MORE SO THAN YOU ARE ME. WHEN WAS LUBYANKA?
EIGHT YEARS AGO.
AND WE FIRST MET...?
RIGHT AFTER I JOINED THE AIR FORCE.

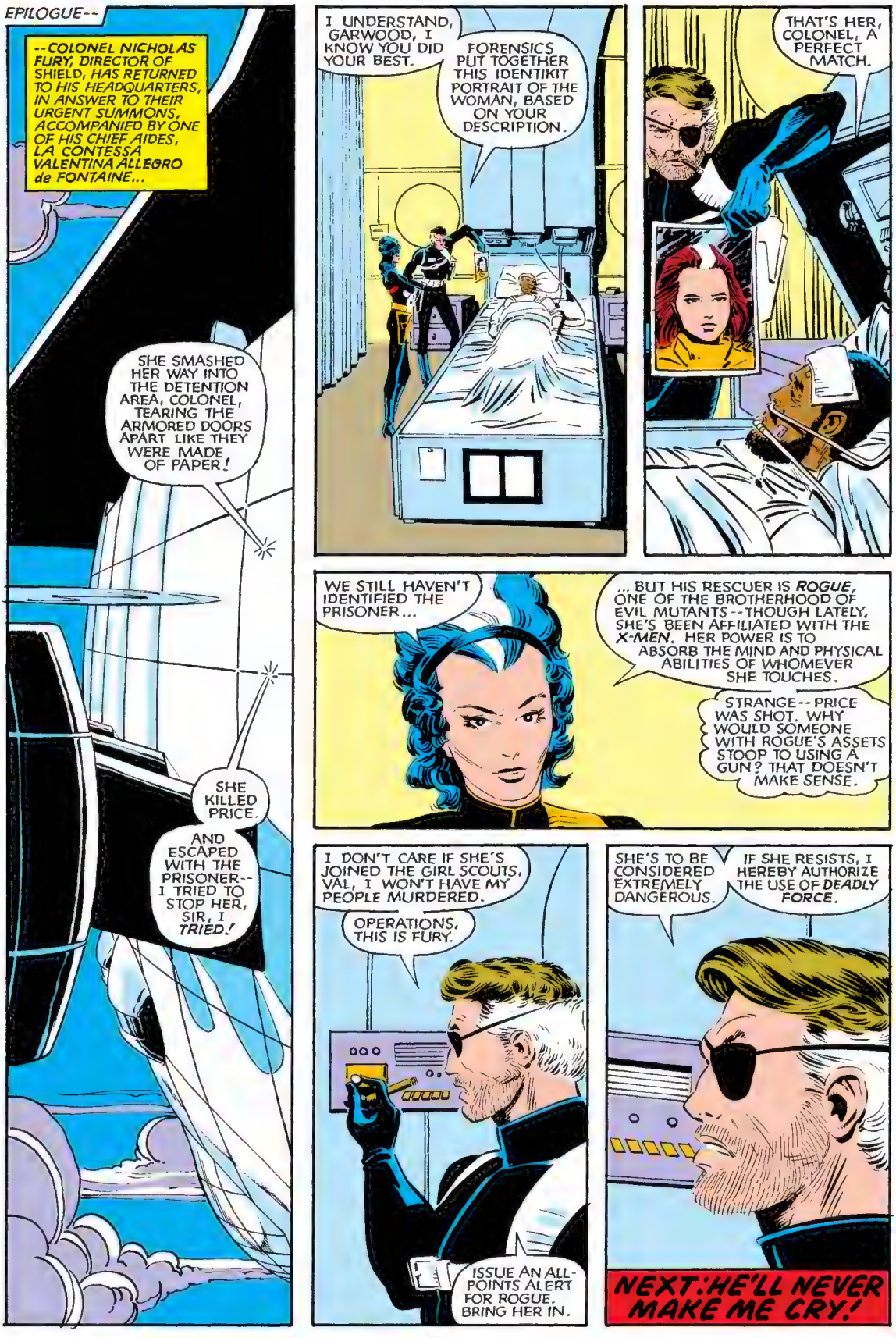

I WAS SO YOUNG BACK THEN, MICHAEL-- SO... INNOCENT. I LOOKED AND ACTED TOUGH, BUT I WASN'T.
WAIT...
... I ENLISTED... WHEN I WAS 18...
... BUT AH'M 18 NOW, HOW CAN THAT BE?!!
HOW... HOW CAN AH R'MEMBER BEIN' WITH YOU, FIGHTIN' BY YOUR SIDE-- LOVIN' YOU-- WHEN AH COULDN'T'A BEEN MORE'N A KID?!
THIS HOUSE-- MY BROTHERS AND I HELPED DAD BUILD IT. I WAS THE OLDEST, I WANTED TO PROVE I WAS AS STRONG AND CAPABLE AS POP, SO WHAT IF I WAS A GIRL!?
THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT, I ENDED UP WITH A WICKED CUT ACROSS MY LEFT HAND.
I KNOW, I'VE SEEN THE SCAR.
IMPOSSIBLE-- ROSSI, THE SKIN ISN'T MARKED!
AN' AH NEVER HAD A FATHER, HE RAN AWAY B'FORE AH WAS BORN. AH NEVER HAD ANY SORT'A FAM'LY AT ALL-- 'TIL AH MET MYSTIQUE.
MY HAIR-- WHY'S IT SO SHORT?!
IT,... IT SHOULD BE BLOND!
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY FACE--
-- WHA'S HAP'NIN' TO ME?!!
SHE'S SWITCHING ACCENTS FROM LINE TO LINE-- AND PERSONALITIES AS WELL!
ROGUE, LISTEN TO ME, YOU'RE NOT CAROL DANVERS!
STOP TRYING TO PRETEND YOU ARE!


IT'S NOT PRETEND!!
MY FOOT--!
OHHH!?!
WHUMPALF!
THE BEACH-- AH FELL!
AH WANT TO RUN-- BUT WHERE DO AH GO TO ESCAPE MYSELF?!
SO MANY THOUGHTS--CAN'T SORT 'EM OUT, DON'T KNOW WHICH ARE MINE, DON'T EVEN KNOW ANYMORE WHO AH REALLY AM!
OH!
NO!
THOSE BOYS-- STEVE AN' JOE, Jr.-- CAROL'S BROTHERS.
STEVE WAS KILLED IN VIETNAM.
THE GIRL-- CAROL HERSELF-- SHE'S RUNNING TOWARDS ME!


SHE-- SHE IS ME!
TOSS THE BALL, STEVE!
I'LL CATCH IT!
AND, FOR A BRIEF WHILE, THESE GHOSTS OF CHILDHOOD LOST DO NOTHING...
... BUT LAUGH AND PLAY.
THEN...
CAROL-- WE'RE SPLITTIN' APART--
--ONLY SHE'S GROWN UP NOW, OLDER'N ME!
THE IMAGES AREN'T REAL, MERELY MEMORIES ROGUE SEES IN HER MIND'S-EYE, FEELS IN BOTH HEART AND SOUL...
... AS SHE RELIVES A LIFE THAT IS-- AND IS NOT-- HERS:
...THE HARD, DANGEROUS YEARS AS A SECRET AGENT, A YOUNG WOMAN'S PASSIONATE FIRST LOVE FOR HER MENTOR AND PARTNER, MICHAEL ROSSI...
... A TRANSFORMATION FROM HUMAN TO SOMETHING MUCH MORE...
... AS CAROL DANVERS BECOMES Ms. MARVEL.
TRIUMPH, TRAGEDY, AN ATTEMPT TO BUILD A NEW AND HAPPIER LIFE IN SAN FRANCISCO...
...SHATTERED ONE SUMMER'S NIGHT BY AN AMBUSH...
... A BATTLE TO THE DEATH...
...WITH QUARTER NEITHER ASKED NOR GIVEN.


ROGUE-- THAT'S HER SCREAMING!
SHE'S ALONE ON THE BEACH-- THERE'S NO SIGN THAT ANYONE ATTACKED HER!
ARE YOU OKAY, KID?!
STAY AWAY FROM ME!
?!?
DON'T TOUCH ME, ROSSI, OR AH MAY DO T'YOU WHAT AH DID TO HER, T'CAROL!
WHAT WAS THAT?
AH... AH STOLE HER LIFE...
...WHEN AH ABSORBED HER POWERS AN MEM'RIES, AH DESTROYED HER, AS SURELY AS IF AH'D PUT A BULLET THROUGH HER HEAD!
AN', IN THE PROCESS, AH MAY'VE DESTROYED MYSELF AS WELL.
AH NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH SHE LOST B'CAUSE OF ME. AH TOOK NOT JUST HER MEM'RIES, BUT THE EMOTIONS THAT WERE BOUND UP WITH 'EM -- ALL THE THINGS THAT GIVE LIFE AN' SELF MEANING!
NOW, WHEN SHE LOOKS AT YOU, OR HER FOLKS, SHE MAY KNOW WHO YOU ARE-- THANKS TO PROFESSOR XAVIER'S THERAPY... AN' HOW SHE SHOULD FEEL TOWARDS YOU...
...BUT AH'M THE ONE WHO FEELS THOSE EMOTIONS!
YOU WERE RIGHT, ROSSI, WE'VE NEVER MET-- BUT INSIDE ME ARE MEM'RIES OF WHEN YOU AN' CAROL WERE IN LOVE. THEY FOOL ME-- AH GET CONFUSED-- AH REACT AS IF THEY'RE MY MEM'RIES, MY EMOTIONS.
HOW COULD YOU HAVE DONE SUCH A THING?!
FOR PITY'S SAKE, WHY?!!


IGNORANCE-- AH DIDN'T KNOW THE FULL EXTENT O' MY POWERS.
ALSO-- HATRED. VENGEANCE. WE'D FOUGHT A FEW MONTHS EARLIER, AH'D ALMOST BEEN KILLED, AH WANTED TO GET EVEN. AH GUESS AH GOT MY WISH.
SHE'S A STRONG WOMAN, THOUGH, SHE WON'T QUIT-- THE CAROL SIDE O' ME KEEPS TRYIN' T' TAKE CONTROL.
AT FIRST, IT WAS SO BAD AH WENT CRAZY, BUT WITH XAVIER'S HELP-- AFTER AH TURNED TO THE X-MEN-- AH FINALLY GOT A HANDLE ON THINGS.
BUT T'NIGHT, AH WAS SO TIRED FROM MY FLIGHT HOME FROM JAPAN, MY DEFENSES WERE DOWN. AH HEARD YOUR VOICE, AN' THAT WAS THAT. CAROL'S KNOWLEDGE ENABLED ME TO INFILTRATE THE HELICARRIER AN' FIND YOU. AH KNEW AH WAS ROGUE...
...BUT AH WAS REACTIN' AS CAROL. AH STILL AM.
AH CAN'T HELP CARIN' FOR YOU, ACE.
DON'T CALL ME THAT, YOU HAVEN'T THE RIGHT!
SO WHAT HAPPENED TO CAROL?
AH'M CAROL-- IN ALL THE WAYS THAT COUNT!
NO!
AH'M SORRY! AH DIDN'T MEAN TO, ROSSI-- AH'M SORRY!
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, ROGUE-- AND I DON'T CARE.
BEFORE GOD, I WISH THERE WAS SOME WAY TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
I WISH I HAD THE POWER TO KILL YOU.
SO DO I, MY LOVE.
SO DO I.


EPILOGUE--
--COLONEL NICHOLAS FURY, DIRECTOR OF SHIELD, HAS RETURNED TO HIS HEADQUARTERS, IN ANSWER TO THEIR URGENT SUMMONS, ACCOMPANIED BY ONE OF HIS CHIEF AIDES, LA CONTESSA VALENTINA ALLEGRO de FONTAINE...
SHE SMASHED HER WAY INTO THE DETENTION AREA, COLONEL, TEARING THE ARMORED DOORS APART LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF PAPER!
SHE KILLED PRICE.
AND ESCAPED WITH THE PRISONER-- I TRIED TO STOP HER, SIR, I TRIED!
I UNDERSTAND, GARWOOD, I KNOW YOU DID YOUR BEST.
FORENSICS PUT TOGETHER THIS IDENTIKIT PORTRAIT OF THE WOMAN, BASED ON YOUR DESCRIPTION.
THAT'S HER, COLONEL, A PERFECT MATCH.
WE STILL HAVEN'T IDENTIFIED THE PRISONER...
... BUT HIS RESCUER IS ROGUE, ONE OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS--THOUGH LATELY, SHE'S BEEN AFFILIATED WITH THE X-MEN. HER POWER IS TO ABSORB THE MIND AND PHYSICAL ABILITIES OF WHOMEVER SHE TOUCHES.
STRANGE-- PRICE WAS SHOT. WHY WOULD SOMEONE WITH ROGUE'S ASSETS STOOP TO USING A GUN? THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
I DON'T CARE IF SHE'S JOINED THE GIRL SCOUTS, VAL, I WON'T HAVE MY PEOPLE MURDERED.
OPERATIONS, THIS IS FURY.
ISSUE AN ALL-POINTS ALERT FOR ROGUE. BRING HER IN.
SHE'S TO BE CONSIDERED EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.
IF SHE RESISTS, I HEREBY AUTHORIZE THE USE OF DEADLY FORCE.
NEXT: HE'LL NEVER MAKE ME CRY!

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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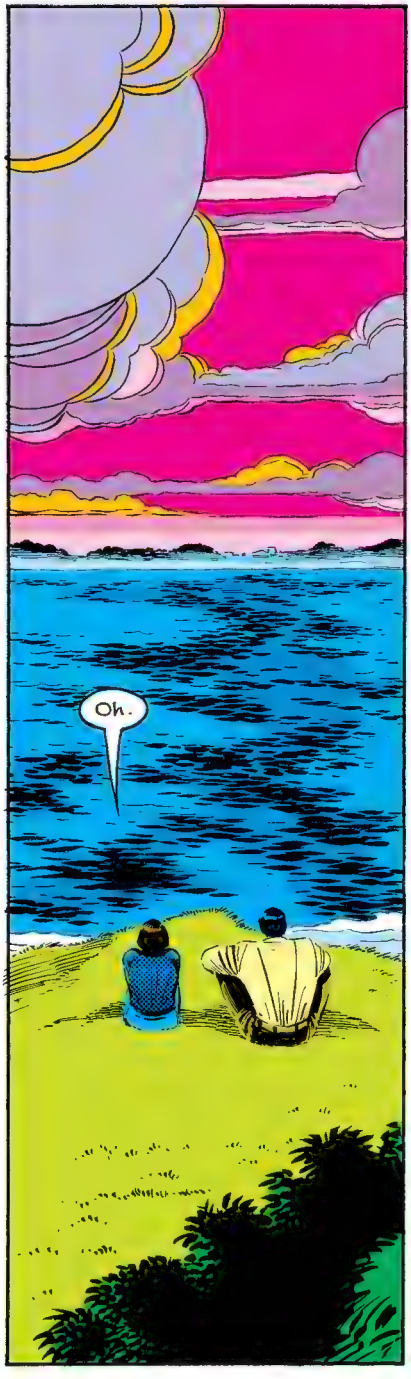
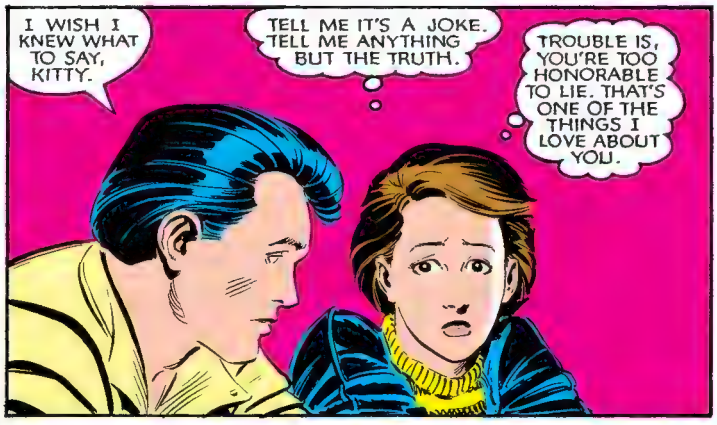
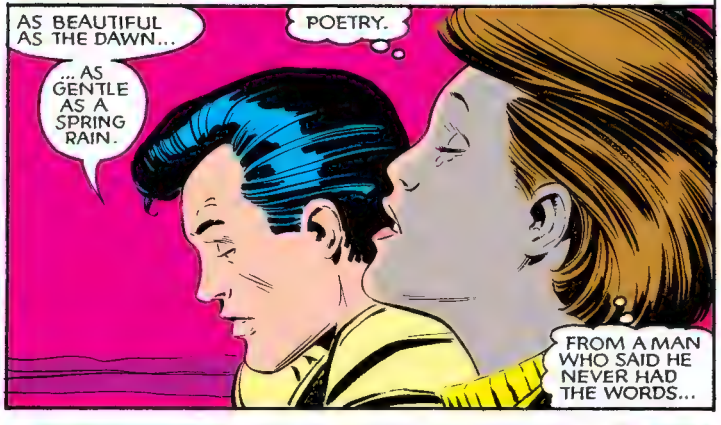
TM
60¢
183
JULY
02461
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JR. JR. + RIG

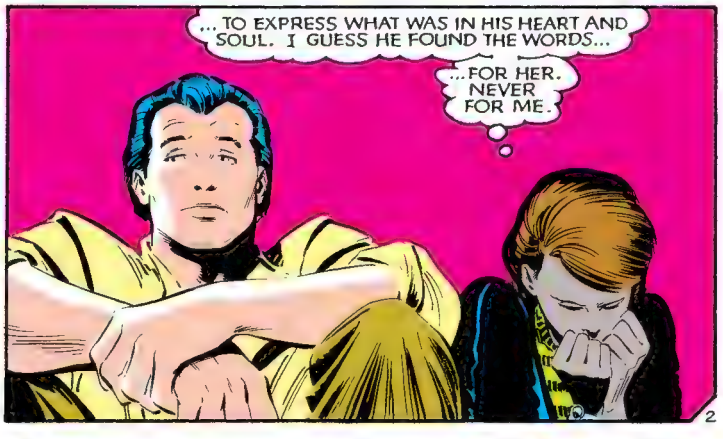
A LOVELY DAY.
SURE IS.
HOW DO I TELL HER, WHEN I KNOW IT WILL BREAK HER HEART?!
HE'S SO TENSE. I'VE NEVER SEEN PETER SO UPSET. HE'S HARDLY SAID A WORD TO ME SINCE THE X-MEN RETURNED HOME,* WHATEVER'S TROUBLING HIM MUST BE AWFUL.
GEE, YOU AND THE X-MEN GOT KIDNAPPED TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE -- AND YOU DIDN'T TAKE ME ALONG. I'M HURT -- ANYTHING INTERESTING HAPPEN OUT THERE?
I MET SOMEONE ELSE. WE FELL IN LOVE.
He'll never make me cry
AN ADVENTURE OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN
PRESENTED BY STAN LEE
AND CHRONICLED BY...
CHRIS CLAREMONT, WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. & DAN GREEN
ARTISTS
TOM ORZECHOWSKI LETTERER
GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST
ANN NOCENTI, EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
*FROM JAPAN, AFTER LAST ISSUE -- ANN.

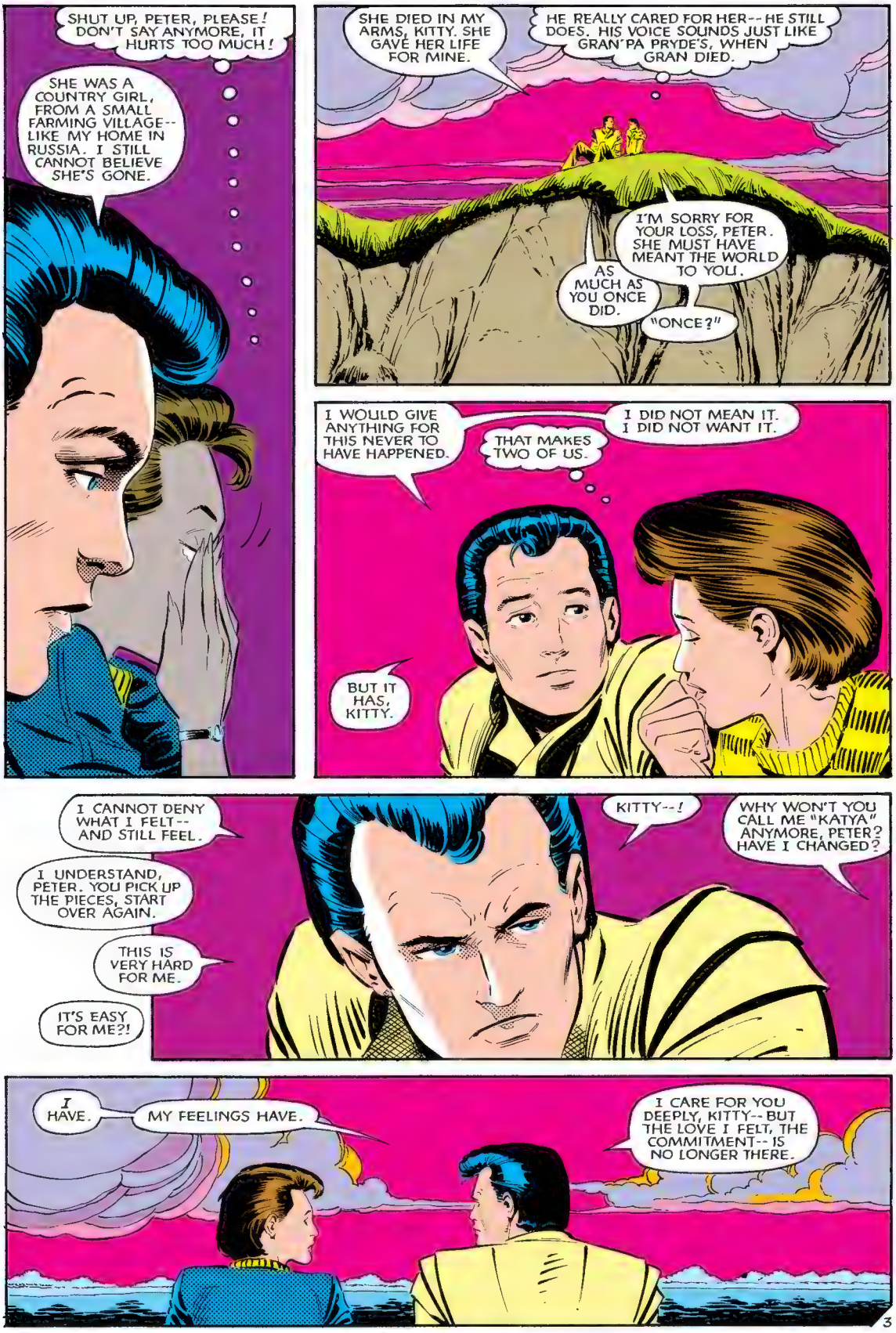

Oh.

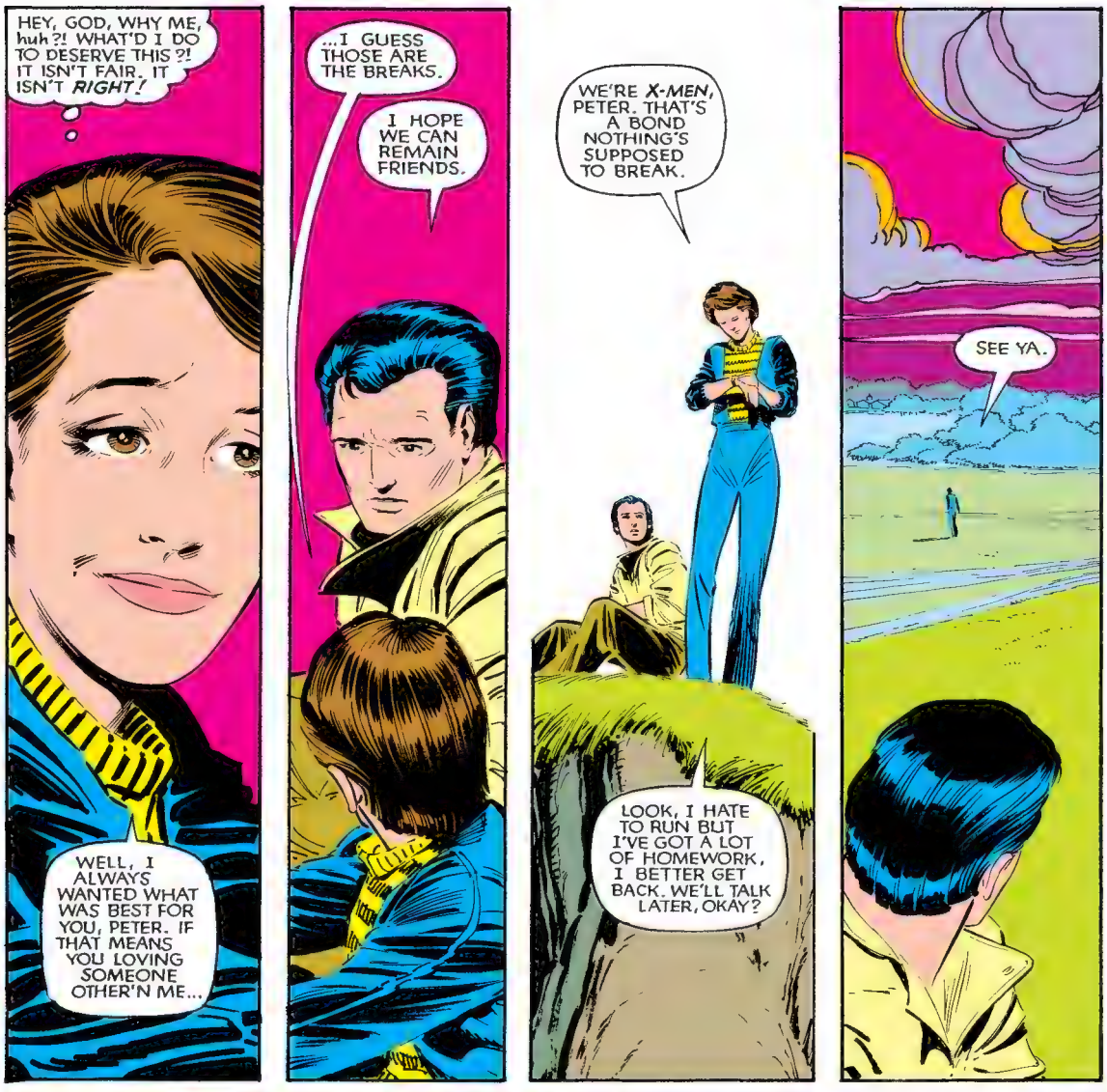

I WISH I KNEW WHAT TO SAY, KITTY.
TELL ME IT'S A JOKE. TELL ME ANYTHING BUT THE TRUTH.
TROUBLE IS, YOU'RE TOO HONORABLE TO LIE. THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT YOU.

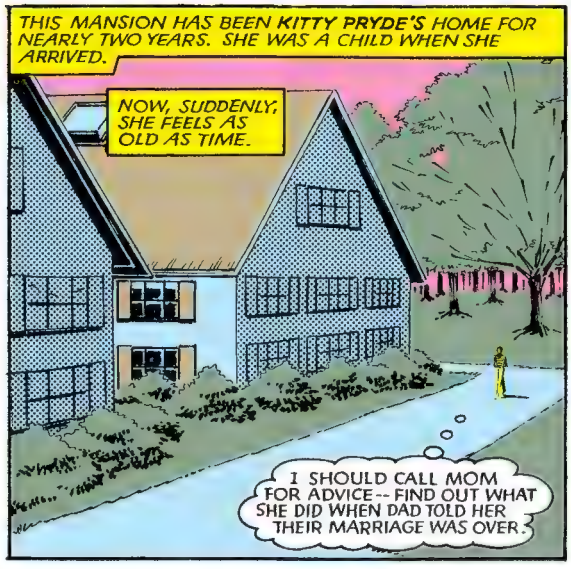
ANYONE... ANYONE I KNOW?
NO. SHE WAS A NATIVE OF THE PLANET THE BEYONDER CREATED. A HEALER. SHE SAVED MY LIFE.
SO DID I.
WAS SHE PRETTY?


AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE DAWN...
... AS GENTLE AS A SPRING RAIN.
POETRY.
FROM A MAN WHO SAID HE NEVER HAD THE WORDS...

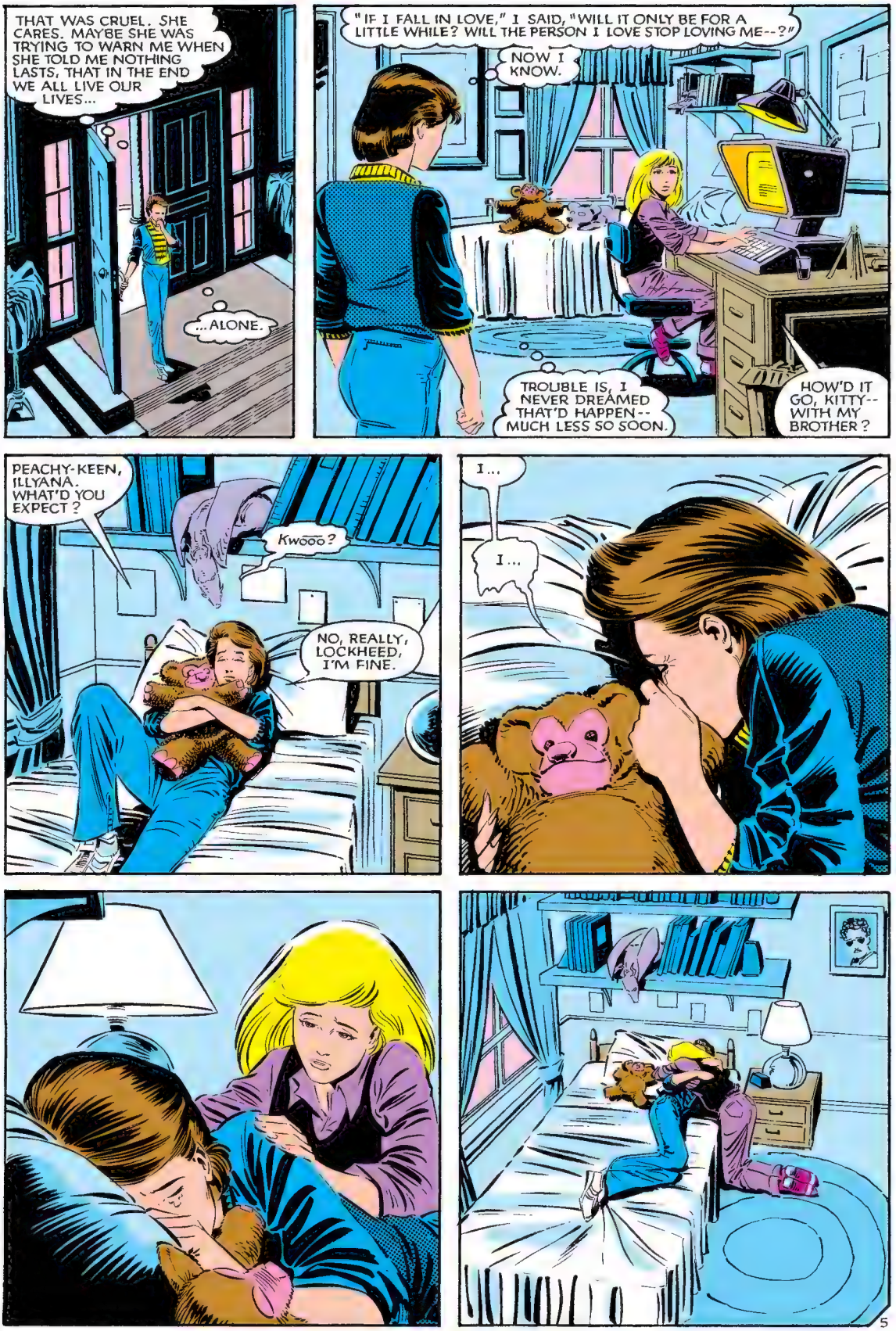

... TO EXPRESS WHAT WAS IN HIS HEART AND SOUL. I GUESS HE FOUND THE WORDS...
... FOR HER. NEVER FOR ME.

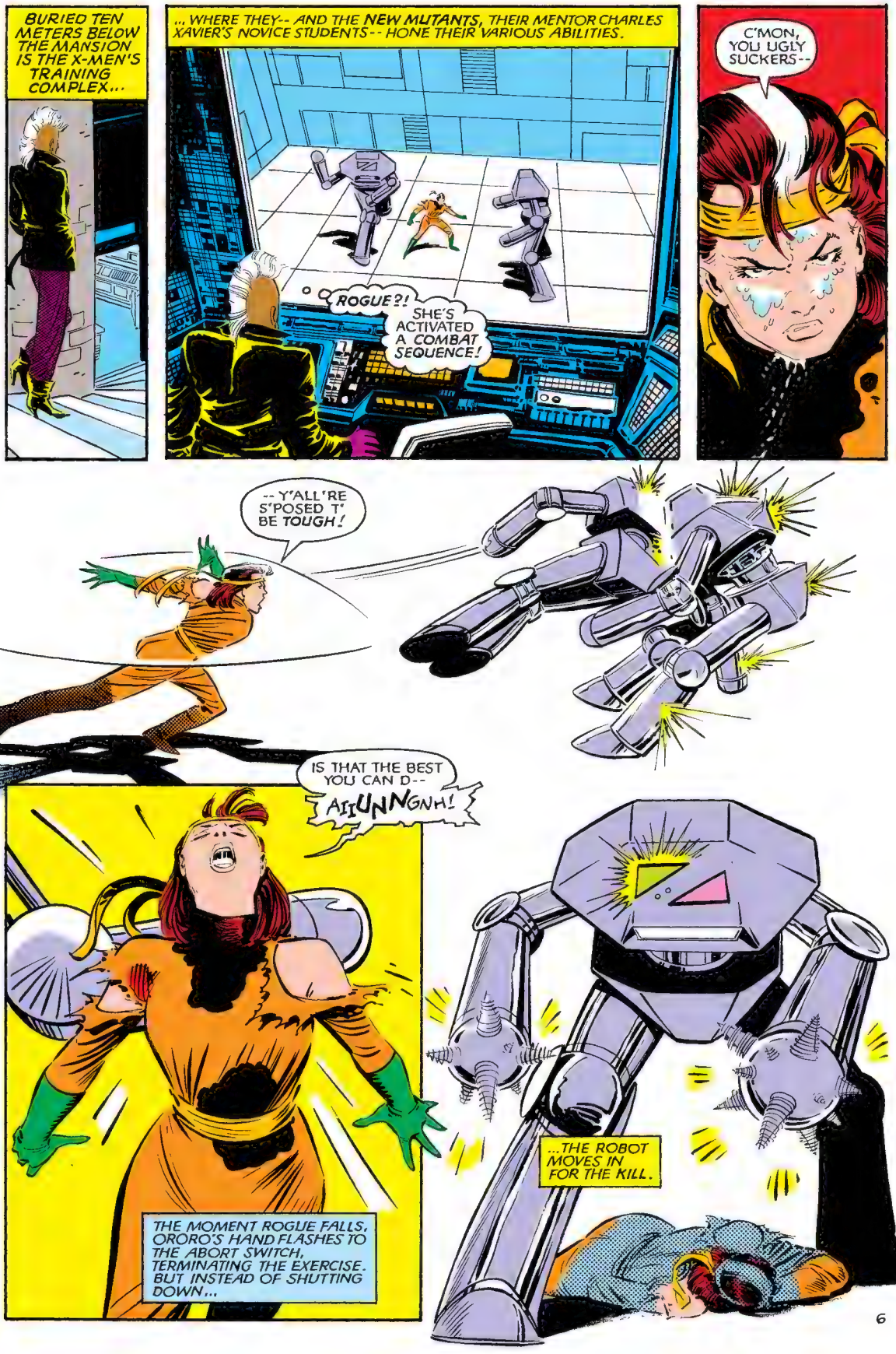

SHUT UP, PETER, PLEASE! DON'T SAY ANYMORE, IT HURTS TOO MUCH!
SHE WAS A COUNTRY GIRL, FROM A SMALL FARMING VILLAGE-- LIKE MY HOME IN RUSSIA. I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE SHE'S GONE.
SHE DIED IN MY ARMS, KITTY. SHE GAVE HER LIFE FOR MINE.
HE REALLY CARED FOR HER-- HE STILL DOES. HIS VOICE SOUNDS JUST LIKE GRAN'PA PRYDE'S, WHEN GRAN DIED.
I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, PETER. SHE MUST HAVE MEANT THE WORLD TO YOU.
AS MUCH AS YOU ONCE DID.
"ONCE?"
I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING FOR THIS NEVER TO HAVE HAPPENED.
I DID NOT MEAN IT. I DID NOT WANT IT.
THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
BUT IT HAS, KITTY.
I CANNOT DENY WHAT I FELT-- AND STILL FEEL.
I UNDERSTAND, PETER. YOU PICK UP THE PIECES, START OVER AGAIN.
THIS IS VERY HARD FOR ME.
IT'S EASY FOR ME?!
KITTY--!
WHY WON'T YOU CALL ME "KATYA" ANYMORE, PETER? HAVE I CHANGED?
I HAVE.
MY FEELINGS HAVE.
I CARE FOR YOU DEEPLY, KITTY-- BUT THE LOVE I FELT, THE COMMITMENT-- IS NO LONGER THERE.

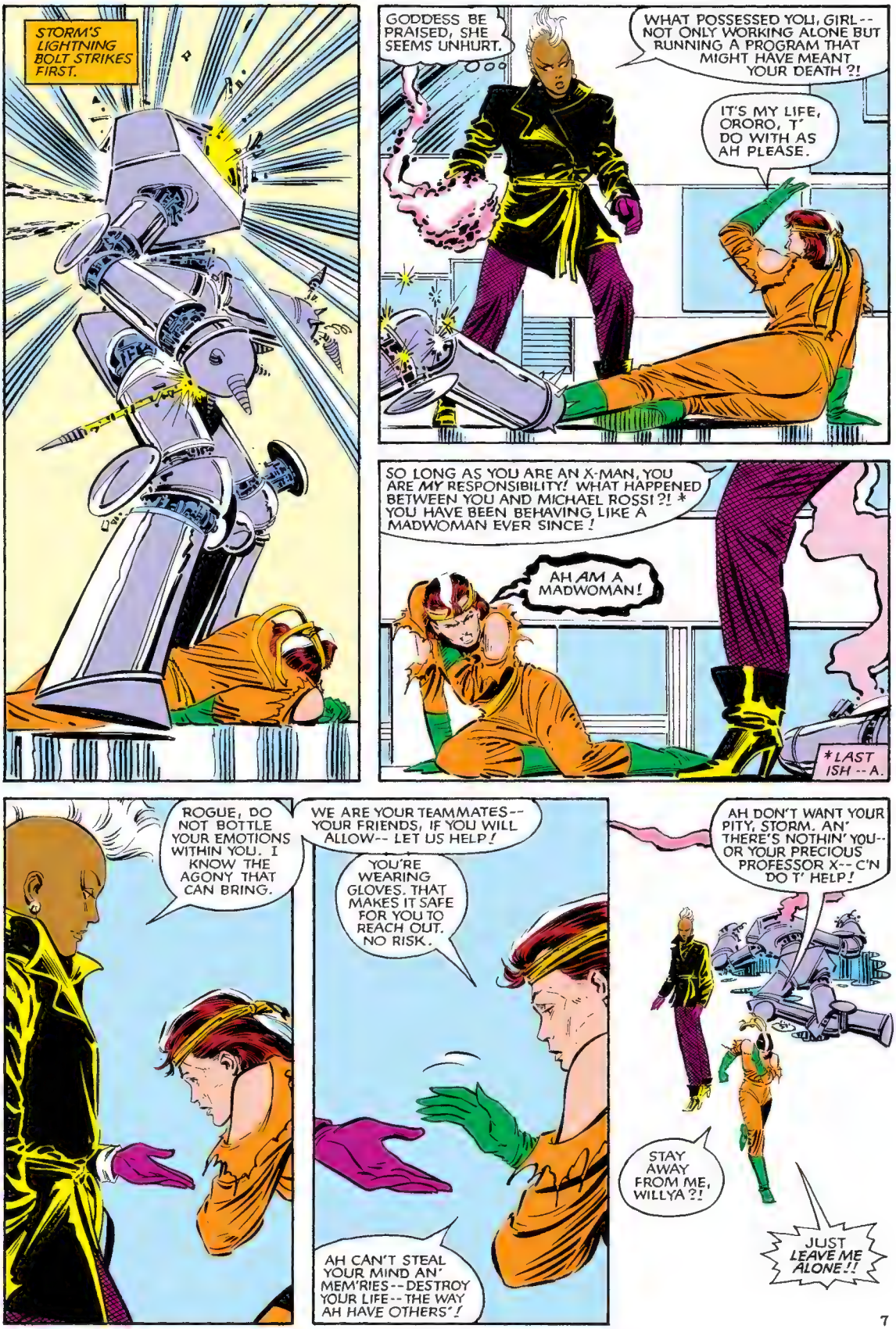

HEY, GOD, WHY ME, huh?! WHAT'D I DO TO DESERVE THIS?! IT ISN'T FAIR. IT ISN'T *RIGHT!*
WELL, I ALWAYS WANTED WHAT WAS BEST FOR YOU, PETER. IF THAT MEANS YOU LOVING SOMEONE OTHER'N ME...
...I GUESS THOSE ARE THE BREAKS.
I HOPE WE CAN REMAIN FRIENDS.
WE'RE *X-MEN*, PETER. THAT'S A BOND NOTHING'S SUPPOSED TO BREAK.
LOOK, I HATE TO RUN BUT I'VE GOT A LOT OF HOMEWORK, I BETTER GET BACK. WE'LL TALK LATER, OKAY?
SEE YA.

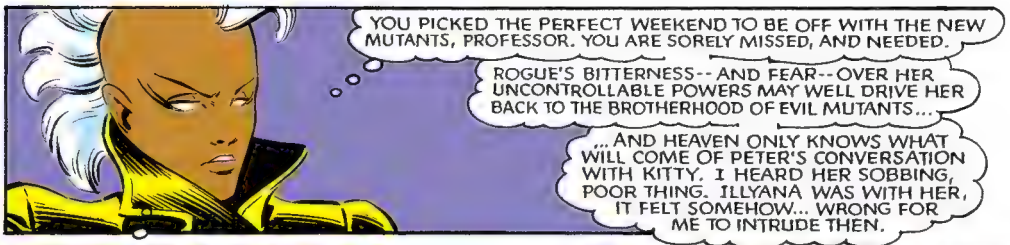

*THIS MANSION HAS BEEN **KITTY PRYDE'S** HOME FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS. SHE WAS A CHILD WHEN SHE ARRIVED.*
NOW, SUDDENLY, SHE FEELS AS OLD AS TIME.
I SHOULD CALL MOM FOR ADVICE-- FIND OUT WHAT SHE DID WHEN DAD TOLD HER THEIR MARRIAGE WAS OVER.

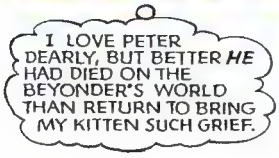
ORORO'S WATCHING. I GUESS SHE KNOWS.
EVERYONE PROBABLY KNOWS.
DON'T SWEAT IT, STORM, I'M A BIG GIRL. I CAN HANDLE THINGS FINE. I'LL MAKE YOU PROUD. I'LL BE AS STRONG AND TOUGH AND HEARTLESS AS YOU.


THAT WAS CRUEL. SHE CARES. MAYBE SHE WAS TRYING TO WARN ME WHEN SHE TOLD ME NOTHING LASTS, THAT IN THE END WE ALL LIVE OUR LIVES...
...ALONE.
"IF I FALL IN LOVE," I SAID, "WILL IT ONLY BE FOR A LITTLE WHILE? WILL THE PERSON I LOVE STOP LOVING ME--?"
NOW I KNOW.
TROUBLE IS, I NEVER DREAMED THAT'D HAPPEN-- MUCH LESS SO SOON.
HOW'D IT GO, KITTY-- WITH MY BROTHER?
PEACHY-KEEN, ILLYANA. WHAT'D YOU EXPECT?
Kwooo?
NO, REALLY, LOCKHEED, I'M FINE.
I...
I...


BURIED TEN METERS BELOW THE MANSION IS THE X-MEN'S TRAINING COMPLEX...
... WHERE THEY-- AND THE NEW MUTANTS, THEIR MENTOR CHARLES XAVIER'S NOVICE STUDENTS-- HONE THEIR VARIOUS ABILITIES.
ROGUE?!
SHE'S ACTIVATED A COMBAT SEQUENCE!
C'MON, YOU UGLY SUCKERS--
-- Y'ALL'RE S'POSED T' BE TOUGH!
IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN D--
AIUNNGNH!
THE MOMENT ROGUE FALLS, ORORO'S HAND FLASHES TO THE ABORT SWITCH, TERMINATING THE EXERCISE. BUT INSTEAD OF SHUTTING DOWN...
...THE ROBOT MOVES IN FOR THE KILL.


STORM'S LIGHTNING BOLT STRIKES FIRST.
GODDESS BE PRAISED, SHE SEEMS UNHURT.
WHAT POSSESSED YOU, GIRL-- NOT ONLY WORKING ALONE BUT RUNNING A PROGRAM THAT MIGHT HAVE MEANT YOUR DEATH ?!
IT'S MY LIFE, ORORO, T' DO WITH AS AH PLEASE.
SO LONG AS YOU ARE AN X-MAN, YOU ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY! WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND MICHAEL ROSSI ?! * YOU HAVE BEEN BEHAVING LIKE A MADWOMAN EVER SINCE !
AH AM A MADWOMAN!
*LAST ISH -- A.
ROGUE, DO NOT BOTTLE YOUR EMOTIONS WITHIN YOU. I KNOW THE AGONY THAT CAN BRING.
WE ARE YOUR TEAMMATES-- YOUR FRIENDS, IF YOU WILL ALLOW-- LET US HELP!
YOU'RE WEARING GLOVES. THAT MAKES IT SAFE FOR YOU TO REACH OUT. NO RISK.
AH CAN'T STEAL YOUR MIND AN' MEM'RIES-- DESTROY YOUR LIFE-- THE WAY AH HAVE OTHERS'!
AH DON'T WANT YOUR PITY, STORM. AN' THERE'S NOTHIN' YOU-- OR YOUR PRECIOUS PROFESSOR X-- C'N DO T' HELP!
STAY AWAY FROM ME, WILLYA ?!
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!!

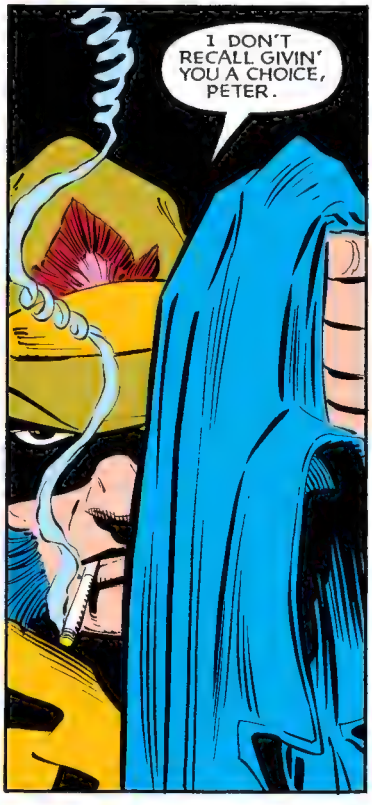

YOU PICKED THE PERFECT WEEKEND TO BE OFF WITH THE NEW MUTANTS, PROFESSOR. YOU ARE SORELY MISSED, AND NEEDED.
ROGUE'S BITTERNESS--AND FEAR--OVER HER UNCONTROLLABLE POWERS MAY WELL DRIVE HER BACK TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS...
...AND HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHAT WILL COME OF PETER'S CONVERSATION WITH KITTY. I HEARD HER SOBBING, POOR THING. ILLYANA WAS WITH HER, IT FELT SOMEHOW... WRONG FOR ME TO INTRUDE THEN.

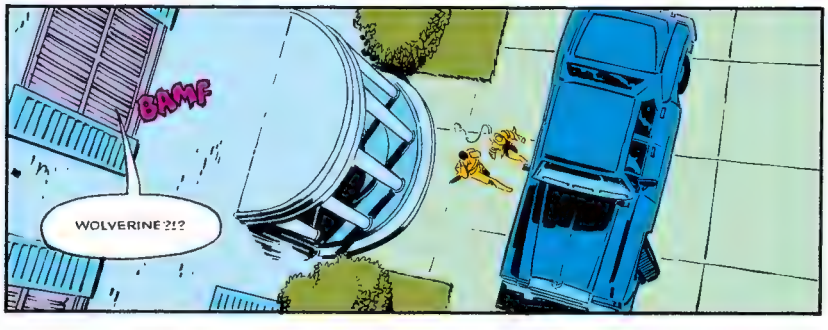

I LOVE PETER DEARLY, BUT BETTER *HE* HAD DIED ON THE BEYONDER'S WORLD THAN RETURN TO BRING MY KITTEN SUCH GRIEF.

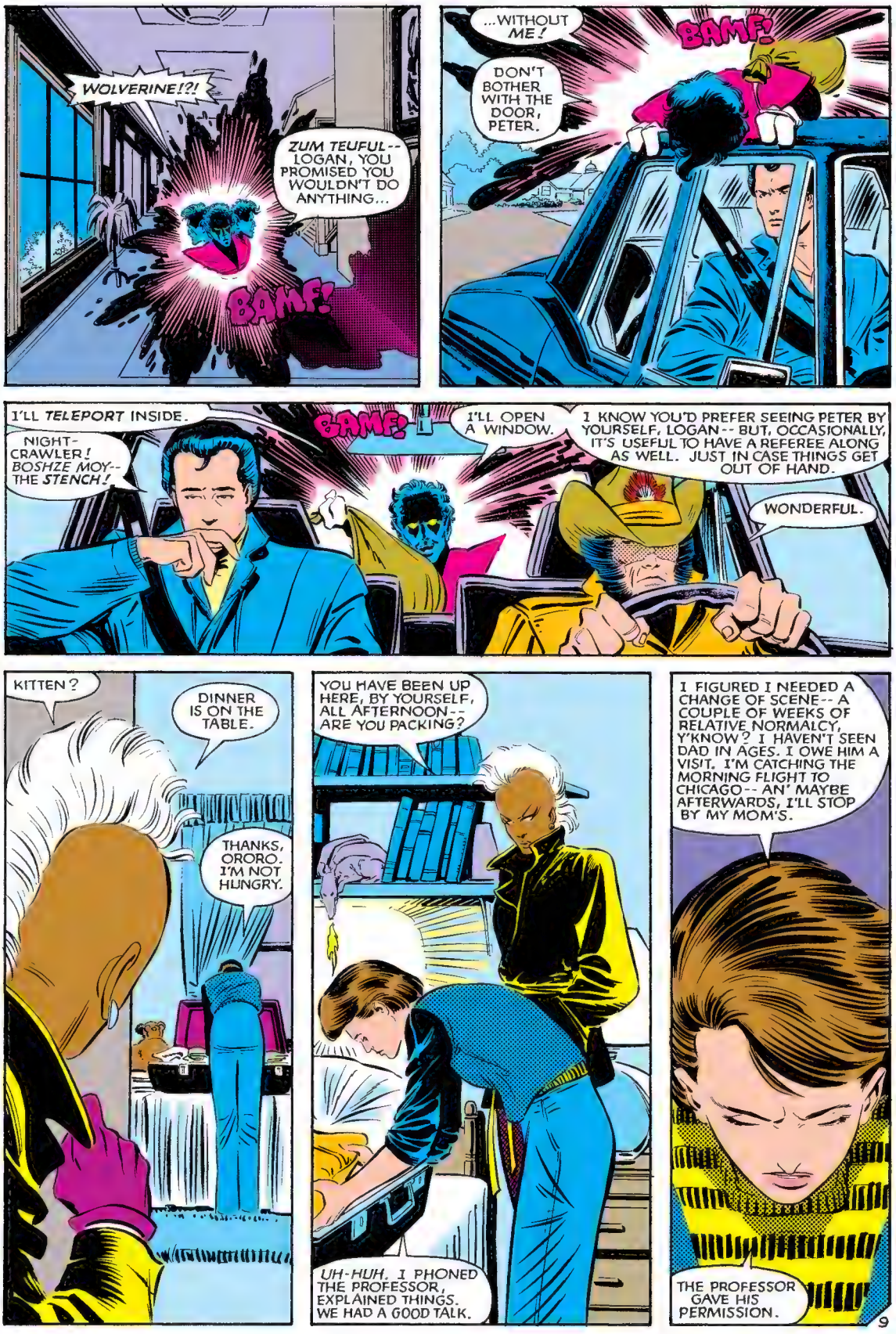
MEANWHILE, UPSTAIRS...
'BOUT TIME, BUB. I WAS BEGINNIN' T' THINK YOU'D NEVER SHOW.
SHTŌ?
WOLVERINE!

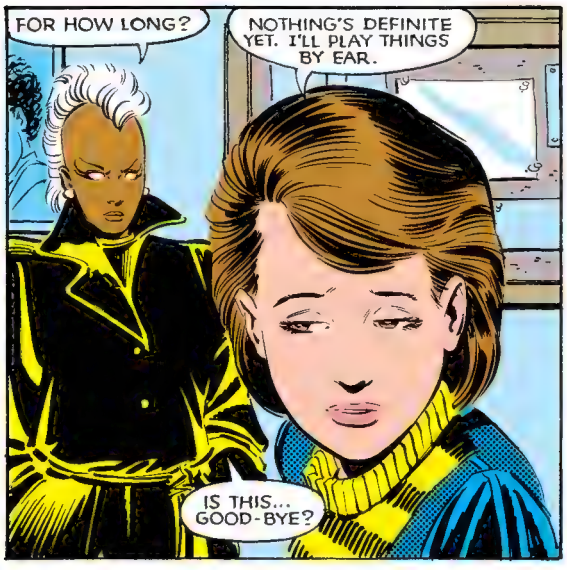
I WAS WALKING, TRYING TO CLEAR MY THOUGHTS.

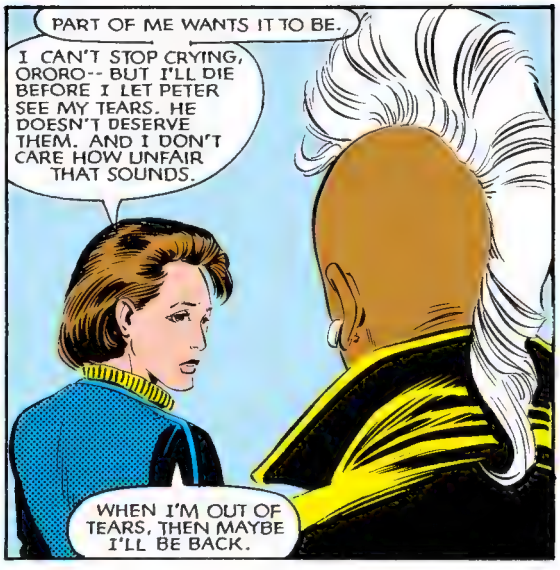
LITTLE LATE, AIN'T'CHA? THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE.
LET ME PASS, PLEASE.
NOPE. YOU'RE COMIN' WITH ME, INTO TOWN, FOR A LITTLE--LONG OVERDUE--TALK.
SOME OTHER TIME, PERHAPS. I AM REALLY NOT IN THE MOOD.

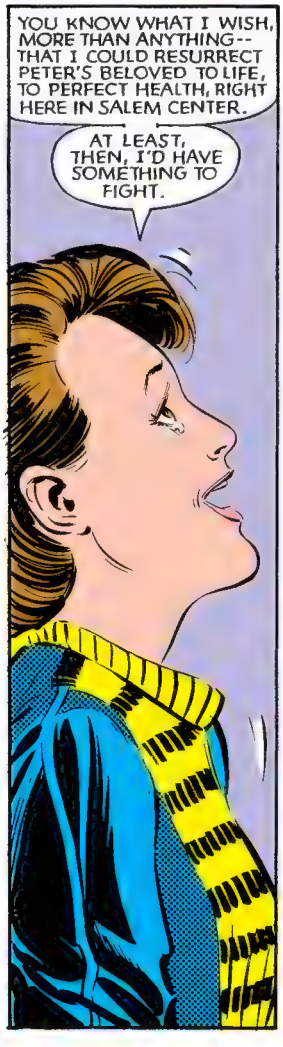

I DON'T RECALL GIVIN' YOU A CHOICE, PETER.

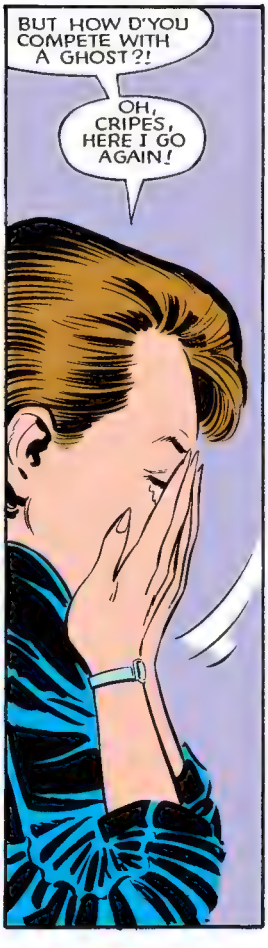

BAMF
WOLVERINE?!?

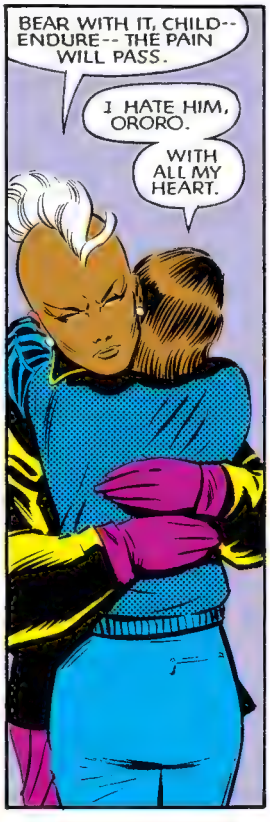

WOLVERINE!?!
ZUM TEUFUL-- LOGAN, YOU PROMISED YOU WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING...
BAMF!
...WITHOUT ME!
DON'T BOTHER WITH THE DOOR, PETER.
BAMF!
I'LL TELEPORT INSIDE.
NIGHT-CRAWLER! BOSHZE MOY-- THE STENCH!
BAMF!
I'LL OPEN A WINDOW.
I KNOW YOU'D PREFER SEEING PETER BY YOURSELF, LOGAN-- BUT, OCCASIONALLY, IT'S USEFUL TO HAVE A REFEREE ALONG AS WELL. JUST IN CASE THINGS GET OUT OF HAND.
WONDERFUL.
KITTEN?
DINNER IS ON THE TABLE.
THANKS, ORORO. I'M NOT HUNGRY.
YOU HAVE BEEN UP HERE, BY YOURSELF, ALL AFTERNOON-- ARE YOU PACKING?
UH-HUH. I PHONED THE PROFESSOR, EXPLAINED THINGS. WE HAD A GOOD TALK.
I FIGURED I NEEDED A CHANGE OF SCENE-- A COUPLE OF WEEKS OF RELATIVE NORMALCY, Y'KNOW? I HAVEN'T SEEN DAD IN AGES. I OWE HIM A VISIT. I'M CATCHING THE MORNING FLIGHT TO CHICAGO-- AN' MAYBE AFTERWARDS, I'LL STOP BY MY MOM'S.
THE PROFESSOR GAVE HIS PERMISSION.

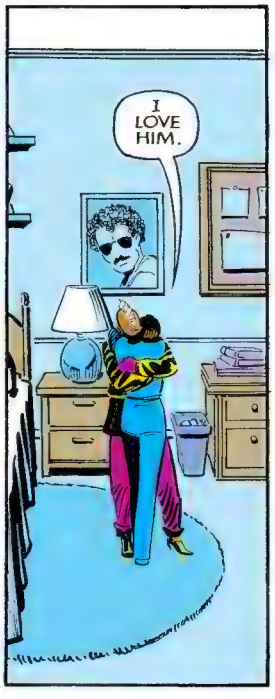

FOR HOW LONG?
NOTHING'S DEFINITE YET. I'LL PLAY THINGS BY EAR.
IS THIS... GOOD-BYE?

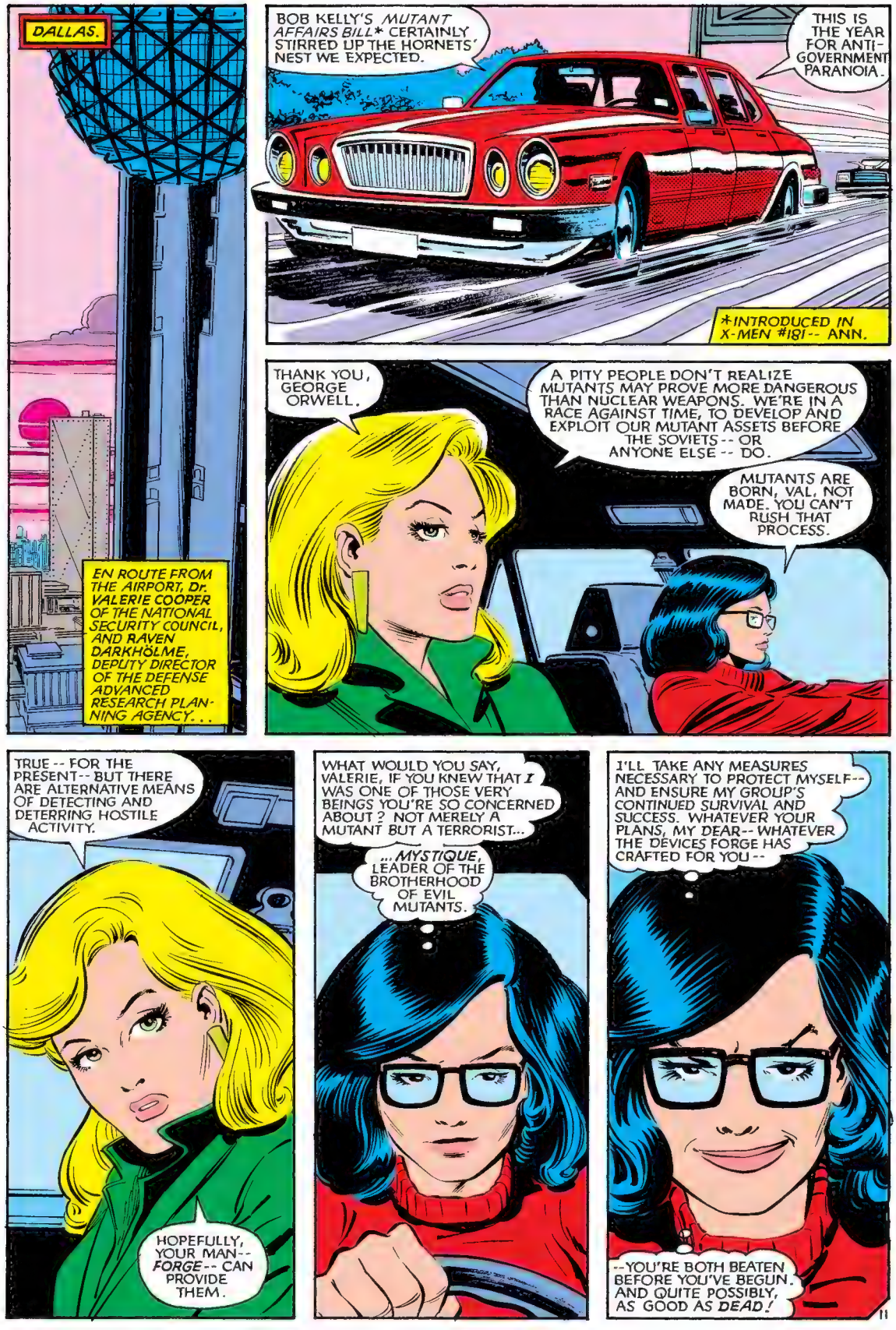

PART OF ME WANTS IT TO BE.
I CAN'T STOP CRYING, ORORO-- BUT I'LL DIE BEFORE I LET PETER SEE MY TEARS. HE DOESN'T DESERVE THEM. AND I DON'T CARE HOW UNFAIR THAT SOUNDS.
WHEN I'M OUT OF TEARS, THEN MAYBE I'LL BE BACK.

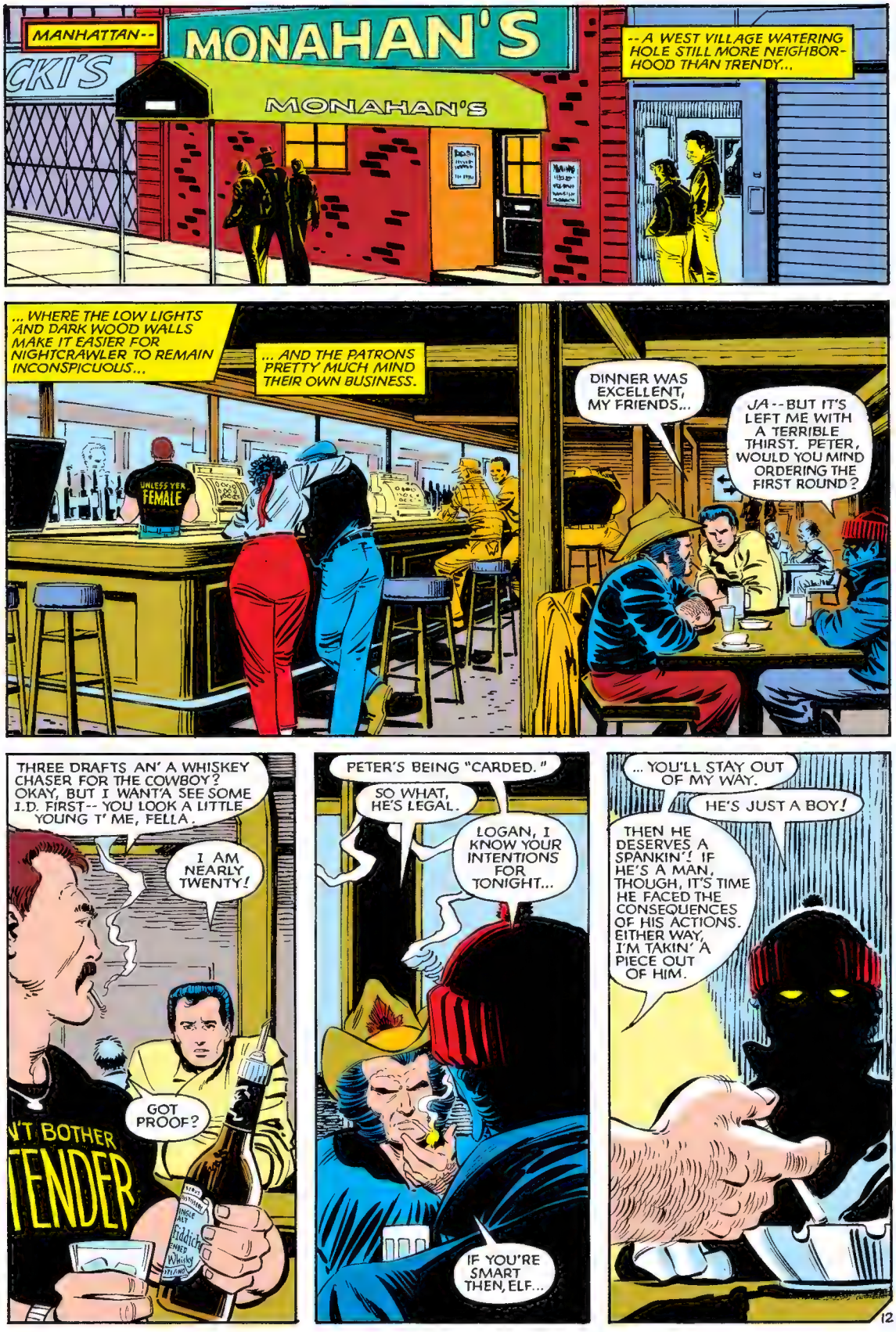

YOU KNOW WHAT I WISH, MORE THAN ANYTHING-- THAT I COULD RESURRECT PETER'S BELOVED TO LIFE, TO PERFECT HEALTH, RIGHT HERE IN SALEM CENTER.
AT LEAST, THEN, I'D HAVE SOMETHING TO FIGHT.


BUT HOW D'YOU COMPETE WITH A GHOST?!
OH, CRIPES, HERE I GO AGAIN!


BEAR WITH IT, CHILD-- ENDURE-- THE PAIN WILL PASS.
I HATE HIM, ORORO.
WITH ALL MY HEART.


I LOVE HIM.


DALLAS.
EN ROUTE FROM THE AIRPORT, Dr. VALERIE COOPER OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, AND RAVEN DARKHÖLME, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PLANNING AGENCY...
BOB KELLY'S MUTANT AFFAIRS BILL* CERTAINLY STIRRED UP THE HORNETS' NEST WE EXPECTED.
THIS IS THE YEAR FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT PARANOIA.
*INTRODUCED IN X-MEN #181-- ANN.
THANK YOU, GEORGE ORWELL.
A PITY PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE MUTANTS MAY PROVE MORE DANGEROUS THAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. WE'RE IN A RACE AGAINST TIME, TO DEVELOP AND EXPLOIT OUR MUTANT ASSETS BEFORE THE SOVIETS -- OR ANYONE ELSE -- DO.
MUTANTS ARE BORN, VAL, NOT MADE. YOU CAN'T RUSH THAT PROCESS.
TRUE -- FOR THE PRESENT -- BUT THERE ARE ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF DETECTING AND DETERRING HOSTILE ACTIVITY.
HOPEFULLY, YOUR MAN-- FORGE -- CAN PROVIDE THEM.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY, VALERIE, IF YOU KNEW THAT I WAS ONE OF THOSE VERY BEINGS YOU'RE SO CONCERNED ABOUT? NOT MERELY A MUTANT BUT A TERRORIST...
...MYSTIQUE, LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
I'LL TAKE ANY MEASURES NECESSARY TO PROTECT MYSELF-- AND ENSURE MY GROUP'S CONTINUED SURVIVAL AND SUCCESS. WHATEVER YOUR PLANS, MY DEAR-- WHATEVER THE DEVICES FORGE HAS CRAFTED FOR YOU --
--YOU'RE BOTH BEATEN BEFORE YOU'VE BEGUN. AND QUITE POSSIBLY, AS GOOD AS DEAD!

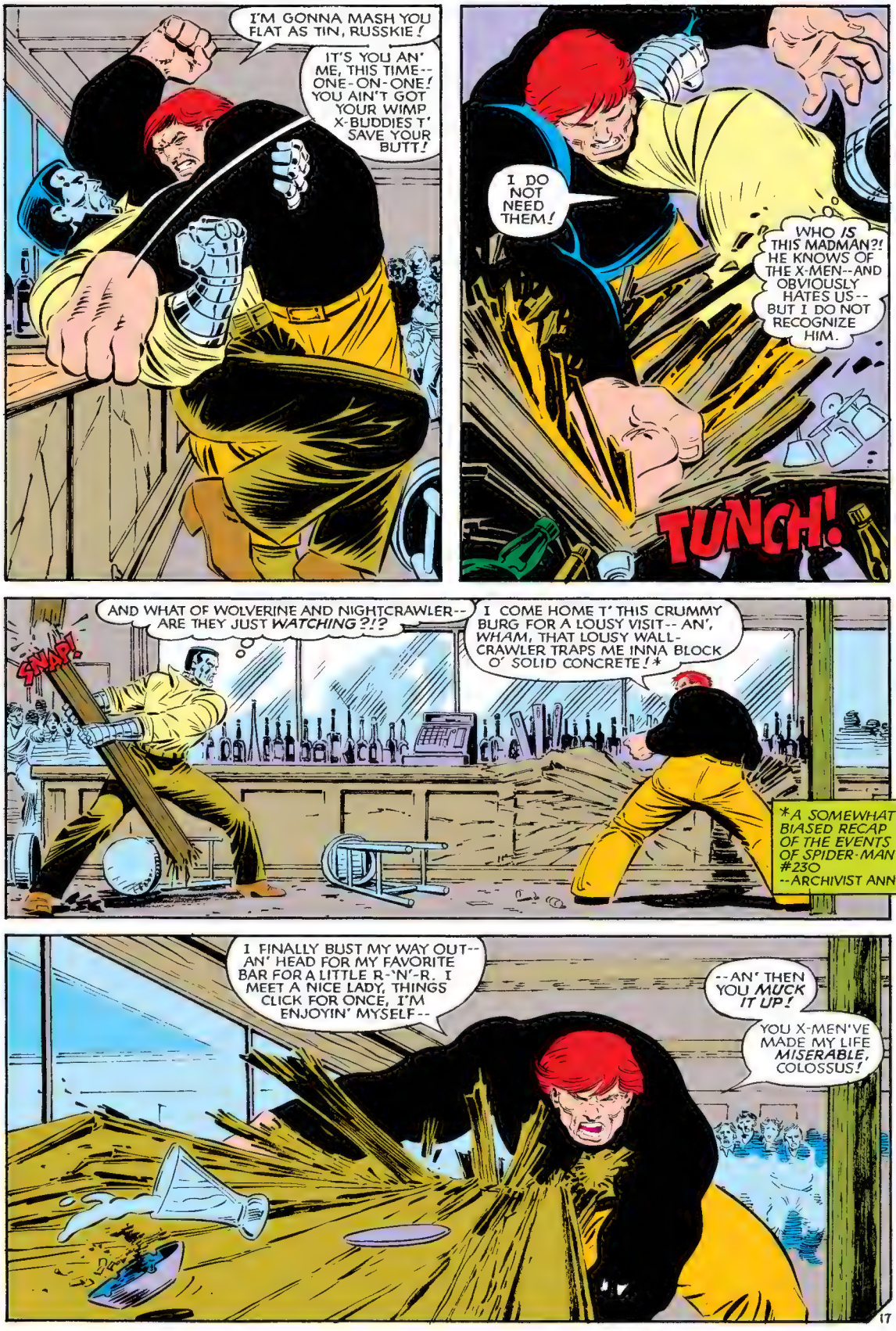

MANHATTAN--
MONAHAN'S
MONAHAN'S
--A WEST VILLAGE WATERING HOLE STILL MORE NEIGHBORHOOD THAN TRENDY...
... WHERE THE LOW LIGHTS AND DARK WOOD WALLS MAKE IT EASIER FOR NIGHTCRAWLER TO REMAIN INCONSPICUOUS...
... AND THE PATRONS PRETTY MUCH MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS.
UNLESS YER A FEMALE
DINNER WAS EXCELLENT, MY FRIENDS...
JA--BUT IT'S LEFT ME WITH A TERRIBLE THIRST. PETER, WOULD YOU MIND ORDERING THE FIRST ROUND?
THREE DRAFTS AN' A WHISKEY CHASER FOR THE COWBOY? OKAY, BUT I WANT'A SEE SOME I.D. FIRST-- YOU LOOK A LITTLE YOUNG T' ME, FELLA.
I AM NEARLY TWENTY!
GOT PROOF?
PETER'S BEING "CARDED."
SO WHAT, HE'S LEGAL.
LOGAN, I KNOW YOUR INTENTIONS FOR TONIGHT...
IF YOU'RE SMART THEN, ELF...
... YOU'LL STAY OUT OF MY WAY.
HE'S JUST A BOY!
THEN HE DESERVES A SPANKIN'! IF HE'S A MAN, THOUGH, IT'S TIME HE FACED THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS. EITHER WAY, I'M TAKIN' A PIECE OUT OF HIM.

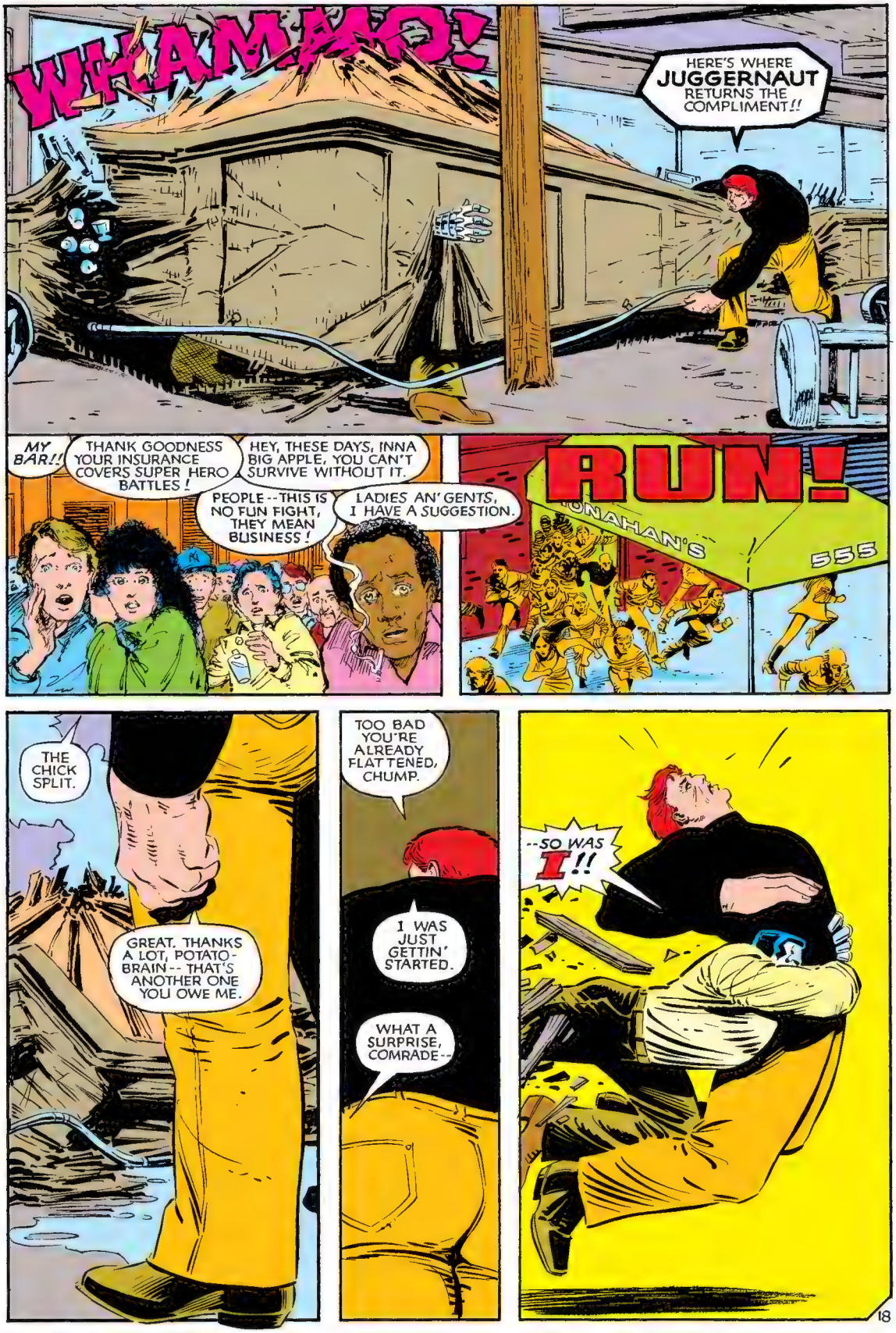
HOURS LATER--
--AFTER A GREAT MANY DRINKS AND INCREASINGLY HEATED WORDS...
Y'OWE KITTY AN APOLOGY-- AN' US AN EXPLANATION!
I TOLD YOU! I FELL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER-- IS THAT A CRIME?!
WHAT YOU FELT WASN'T LOVE.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?! ARE YOUR ENHANCED ANIMAL SENSES ABLE TO SEE INTO MY HEART AND SOUL? BY WHAT RIGHT DO YOU TELL ME HOW TO RUN MY LIFE?!!
YOU'RE MAKIN' A BAD MISTAKE, PETER. YOU'RE HURTIN' TWO PEOPLE I CARE FOR--
--YOURSELF, DUMMY, AND KITTY!
SHOULD I HAVE LIED TO HER, PRETENDED EMOTIONS THAT NO LONGER EXIST?! THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN TRUE CRUELTY.
ARE YOU SO CERTAIN -- OF YOUR FEELINGS, I MEAN?
DA-- ABSOLUTELY.
YOU SURE YOU AIN'T JUST SCARED?
OF WHAT--?!
SOMETIMES, BUB, WINNIN'S AS HARD TO DEAL WITH AS LOSIN'.
KITTY'S NOT A KID ANYMORE--YOU TWO WERE GOIN' BEYOND PLAYIN' GAMES. YOU WERE THINKIN' MARRIAGE, A LIFE TOGETHER. AT THE SAME TIME, YOU SUDDENLY HAD COMPETITION-- FROM DOUG RAMSEY-- SOMEONE KITTY'S AGE, AS SMART AS HER, WITH TH' SAME UPBRINGIN' AN' INTERESTS.
IT'S EASY T' MOON OVER A LOST LOVE-- T' FANTASIZE OVER WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN--IT MAKES A GREAT EXCUSE FOR NOT FACIN' THE RISKS AN' DEMANDS O' REALITY.
WHO ARE YOU TO TALK?! YOU WALKED AWAY FROM THE WOMAN YOU PROFESSED TO LOVE!

I LEFT MARIKO 'CAUSE SHE ASKED ME. OUR SEPARATION'S A MATTER O' HONOR AN' DUTY-- F'R US, THAT TRANSCENDS LOVE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT HURTS.
IF I HAD TRULY LOVED KITTY, WOLVERINE, HOW THEN COULD I HAVE SO EASILY FALLEN FOR ANOTHER?!
FEAR MAKES A BODY DO STUPID THINGS SOMETIMES.
WHOA!
DO YOU CALL ME A COWARD?!
YUP.
I KNOW THAT SCENT!
"IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE OUR PATHS LAST CROSSED-- MURPHY'S LAW WOULD BRING HIM IN HERE TONIGHT.
"THERE'S ONLY THE ONE FAMILIAR SCENT-- AT LEAST HE DIDN'T BRING HIS PARTNER.
"HE'S CLOSE--
"--BINGO!
HE'S IN CIVVIES-- RELAXED AN' ON THE PROWL. LOOKS LIKE THE X-MEN ARE THE LAST THING ON HIS MIND--
--WHICH SUITS ME FINE.
HE HASN'T SPOTTED US. I AIM T' KEEP IT THAT WAY. WE'VE GOTTA GET OUTTA THIS JOINT FAST AN' QUIETLY, WITHOUT ATTRACTING ANY ATTENTION. HE'S SEEN US OUT OF COSTUME, HE KNOWS OUR FACES.
ON YOUR FEET, BOY, YOU NEED SOME AIR.
WAS IST--?!
'PORT AHEAD, ELF, MEET US OUTSIDE. I'LL EXPLAIN THERE.

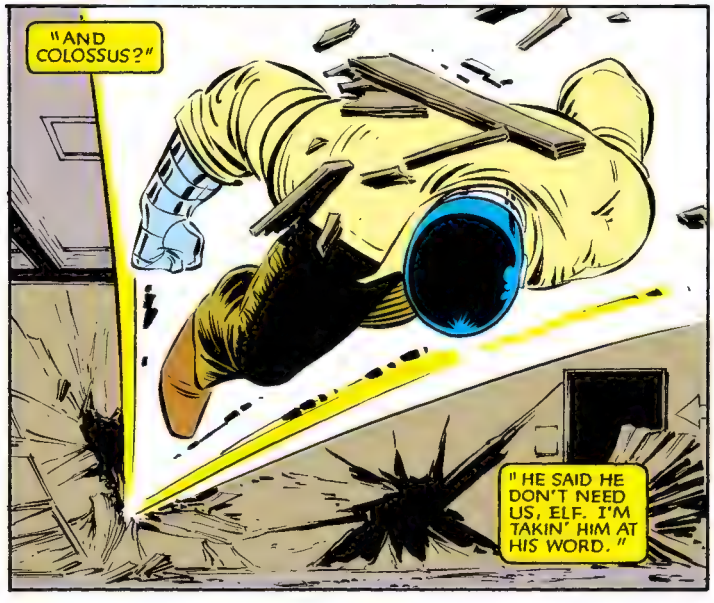
AND SUPPOSE I DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE--?!
PETEY!
THAT'S TORN IT!
HEY!
FORGIVE ME, SIR, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. I WILL BE GLAD TO REPAY...
DARN STRAIGHT, BOZO--
--ONLY MONEY AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH!
I'M TAKIN' IT OUTTA YOUR HIDE!!
WHOUNFF!
BRASH!
HAD I NOT TRANSFORMED INTO MY ARMORED SELF, THAT IMPACT MIGHT HAVE KILLED ME!
I DID NOT DESIRE A FIGHT, COMRADE. BUT SINCE YOU INSIST, I WILL GIVE YOU ONE...
...YOU WILL NEVER FORGET!

WE'D BETTER STOP THIS, WOLVERINE. THE MAN AT THE BAR HASN'T A PRAYER!
NICE THOUGHT, PAL, BUT IF ANYONE'S IN TROUBLE...
CRASH!
...IT'S PETEY--DUCK!
WE'LL MOVE IN IF THINGS GET OUT O' HAND. 'TILL THEN...
...I AIM T' SIT BACK AN' ENJOY THE SHOW.
"IT'S WHAT THE BOY DESERVES--
"--WHAT I WAS PLANNIN' T' DO TO HIM MYSELF."
RUFFIANS!
TWENTY ONNA BIG GUY!
SAMMY, THEY'RE BOTH BIG!
SHOULDN'T SOMEONE CALL THE COPS?
BE MY GUEST--PHONE'S BEHIND THE BAR.
HOW KIND YOU ARE--AND HANDSOME.
I FEEL SO MUCH SAFER WITH YOU BESIDE ME.

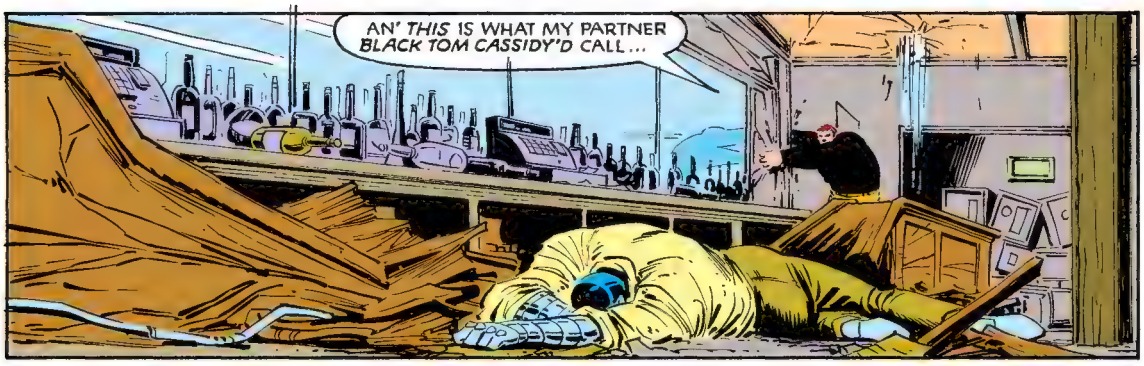

I'M GONNA MASH YOU FLAT AS TIN, RUSSKIE!
IT'S YOU AN' ME, THIS TIME--ONE-ON-ONE! YOU AIN'T GOT YOUR WIMP X-BUDDIES T' SAVE YOUR BUTT!
I DO NOT NEED THEM!
WHO IS THIS MADMAN?! HE KNOWS OF THE X-MEN--AND OBVIOUSLY HATES US--BUT I DO NOT RECOGNIZE HIM.
TUNCH!
AND WHAT OF WOLVERINE AND NIGHTCRAWLER--ARE THEY JUST WATCHING?!?
I COME HOME T' THIS CRUMMY BURG FOR A LOUSY VISIT-- AN', WHAM, THAT LOUSY WALL-CRAWLER TRAPS ME INNA BLOCK O' SOLID CONCRETE!*
SNAP!
*A SOMEWHAT BIASED RECAP OF THE EVENTS OF SPIDER-MAN #230 --ARCHIVIST ANN.
I FINALLY BUST MY WAY OUT-- AN' HEAD FOR MY FAVORITE BAR FOR A LITTLE R-'N'-R. I MEET A NICE LADY, THINGS CLICK FOR ONCE, I'M ENJOYIN' MYSELF--
--AN' THEN YOU MUCK IT UP!
YOU X-MEN'VE MADE MY LIFE MISERABLE, COLOSSUS!


WHAMMO!
HERE'S WHERE JUGGERNAUT RETURNS THE COMPLIMENT!!
MY BAR!!
THANK GOODNESS YOUR INSURANCE COVERS SUPER HERO BATTLES!
HEY, THESE DAYS, INNA BIG APPLE, YOU CAN'T SURVIVE WITHOUT IT.
PEOPLE--THIS IS NO FUN FIGHT, THEY MEAN BUSINESS!
LADIES AN' GENTS, I HAVE A SUGGESTION.
RUN!
555
THE CHICK SPLIT.
GREAT. THANKS A LOT, POTATO-BRAIN-- THAT'S ANOTHER ONE YOU OWE ME.
TOO BAD YOU'RE ALREADY FLATTENED, CHUMP.
I WAS JUST GETTIN' STARTED.
WHAT A SURPRISE, COMRADE--
--SO WAS I!!

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU X-MEN, BOY-- YOU'RE GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT.
CRASH!
I AM NO BOY!
TOUCHY-TOUCHY-- HIT A NERVE, DID I? WELL, IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I'M SAYIN', YOU KNOW HOW TO SHUT ME UP!
C'MON, COLOSSUS-- LET'S SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO!
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT!
LOGAN, THE BAR'S A SHAMBLES-- WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!
GOT ANY SUGGESTIONS?
THAT'S JUGGERNAUT, PAL-- THE CLOSEST THING ON EARTH TO AN IRRESISTIBLE FORCE.
LOOK, IF INSURANCE WON'T COVER THE DAMAGES, I WILL. THIS IS ONE SCRAP WORTH PAYIN' FOR.

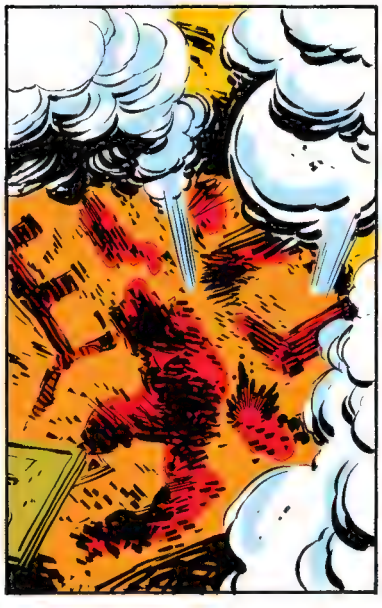

"AND COLOSSUS?"
"HE SAID HE DON'T NEED US, ELF. I'M TAKIN' HIM AT HIS WORD."

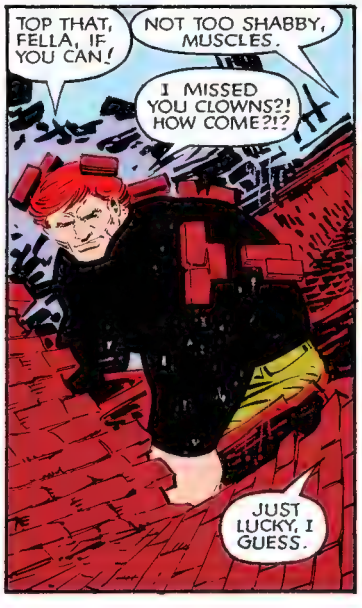
THAT, SUCKER, WAS MY SUNDAY PUNCH!


AN' THIS IS WHAT MY PARTNER BLACK TOM CASSIDY'D CALL...

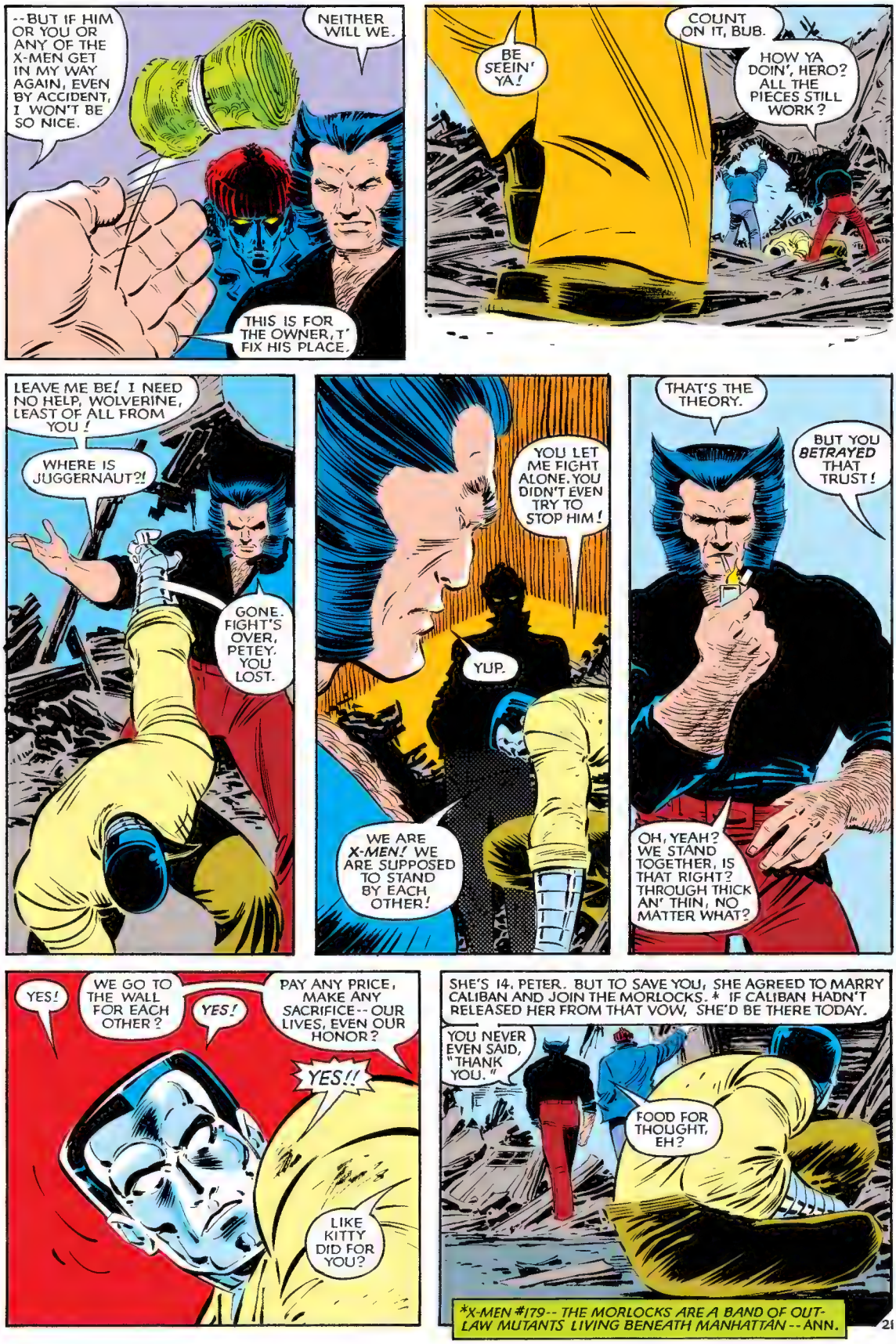
...THE COUP DE GRACE!!
RRIP!

FOOMF!

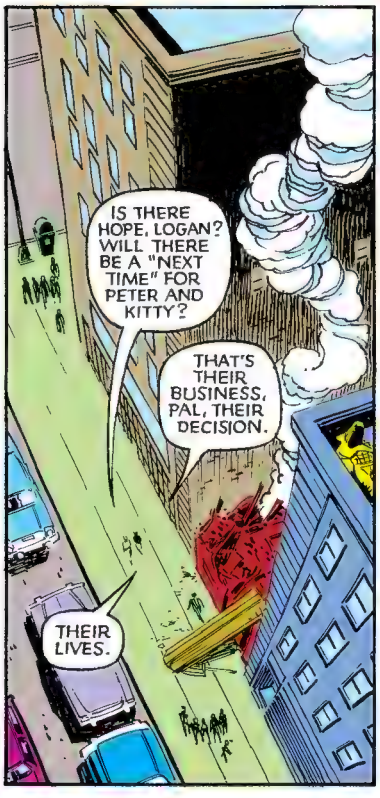



TOP THAT, FELLA, IF YOU CAN!
NOT TOO SHABBY, MUSCLES.
I MISSED YOU CLOWNS?! HOW COME?!?
JUST LUCKY, I GUESS.

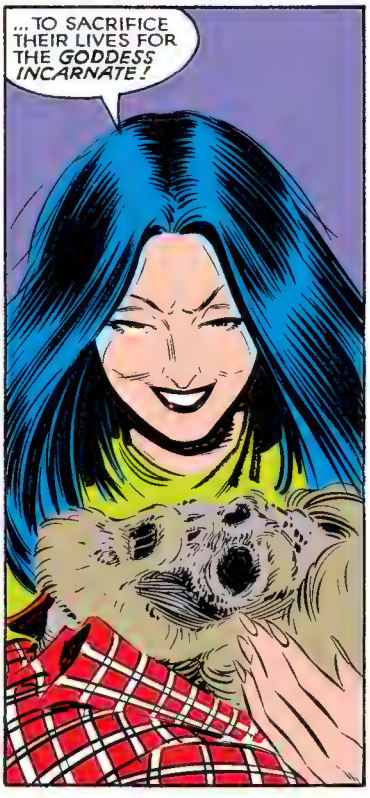
YOU LOOKIN' FER A PIECE O' THIS ACTION?!
NOPE.
SMART PLAY, SHRIMP.
YOU TELL THE KID FROM ME HE DID HIMSELF PROUD. HE'S GOT GUTS AN' HEART-- AN' HE THROWS A MEAN RIGHT CROSS--

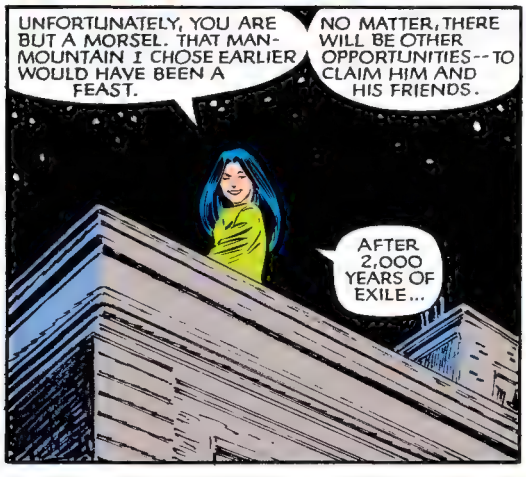

--BUT IF HIM OR YOU OR ANY OF THE X-MEN GET IN MY WAY AGAIN, EVEN BY ACCIDENT, I WON'T BE SO NICE.
NEITHER WILL WE.
THIS IS FOR THE OWNER, T' FIX HIS PLACE.
BE SEEIN' YA!
COUNT ON IT, BUB.
HOW YA DOIN', HERO? ALL THE PIECES STILL WORK?
LEAVE ME BE! I NEED NO HELP, WOLVERINE, LEAST OF ALL FROM YOU!
WHERE IS JUGGERNAUT?!
GONE. FIGHT'S OVER, PETEY. YOU LOST.
YOU LET ME FIGHT ALONE. YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO STOP HIM!
YUP.
WE ARE X-MEN! WE ARE SUPPOSED TO STAND BY EACH OTHER!
THAT'S THE THEORY.
BUT YOU BETRAYED THAT TRUST!
OH, YEAH? WE STAND TOGETHER, IS THAT RIGHT? THROUGH THICK AN' THIN, NO MATTER WHAT?
YES!
WE GO TO THE WALL FOR EACH OTHER?
YES!
PAY ANY PRICE, MAKE ANY SACRIFICE--OUR LIVES, EVEN OUR HONOR?
YES!!
LIKE KITTY DID FOR YOU?
SHE'S 14, PETER. BUT TO SAVE YOU, SHE AGREED TO MARRY CALIBAN AND JOIN THE MORLOCKS. * IF CALIBAN HADN'T RELEASED HER FROM THAT VOW, SHE'D BE THERE TODAY.
YOU NEVER EVEN SAID, "THANK YOU."
FOOD FOR THOUGHT, EH?
*X-MEN #179-- THE MORLOCKS ARE A BAND OF OUTLAW MUTANTS LIVING BENEATH MANHATTAN -- ANN.

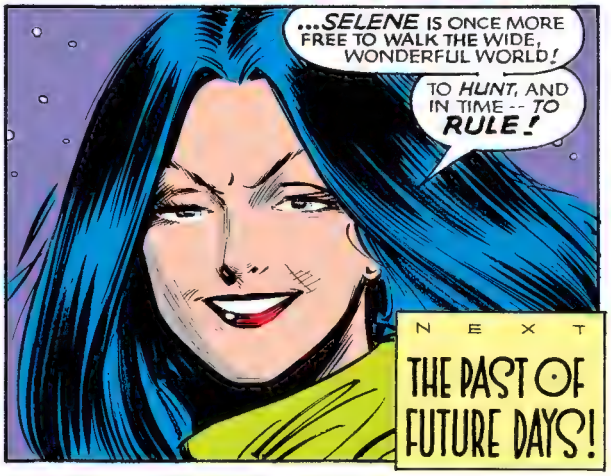
THAT WAS VERY HARSH, LOGAN, AND UNFORGIVING.
SO AM I.
PETER NEVER ONCE CONSIDERED *HER* FEELINGS, KURT, WHAT *SHE* WAS GOIN' THROUGH. HE NEVER GAVE HER A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN, OR THEM BOTH ONE TO WORK THINGS OUT. IT'S LIKE THE BOY JUST CUT HER OUT OF HIS HEART.
HE'S VERY YOUNG.
HE OWED HER *GIRI*-- A BLOOD-DEBT OBLIGATION-- AN' HE WELSHED!
A BODY CAN'T DO THAT, 'SPECIALLY TO SOMEONE THEY LOVE. MORE SO-- TO SOMEONE THEY RESPECT! I'M GLAD HE HAD T' LEARN THE HARD WAY. IT'S A TASTE OF WHAT HE DID TO KITTY.
HE KNOWS NOW WHAT HE DID. NEXT TIME--WHATEVER THE OUTCOME--HE'LL ACT FROM CHOICE, NOT IGNORANCE.


IS THERE HOPE, LOGAN? WILL THERE BE A "NEXT TIME" FOR PETER AND KITTY?
THAT'S THEIR BUSINESS, PAL, THEIR DECISION.
THEIR LIVES.

YOU SHOULD FEEL BLESSED, STUART.
ONLY THE VERY FINEST-- THE BEST HUMANITY HAS TO OFFER-- ARE CALLED UPON...


...TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES FOR THE *GODDESS INCARNATE!*


UNFORTUNATELY, YOU ARE BUT A MORSEL. THAT MAN-MOUNTAIN I CHOSE EARLIER WOULD HAVE BEEN A FEAST.
NO MATTER, THERE WILL BE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES--TO CLAIM HIM AND HIS FRIENDS.
AFTER 2,000 YEARS OF EXILE...


...*SELENE* IS ONCE MORE FREE TO WALK THE WIDE, WONDERFUL WORLD!
TO *HUNT*, AND IN TIME-- TO *RULE!*
NEXT
THE PAST OF FUTURE DAYS!

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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TM
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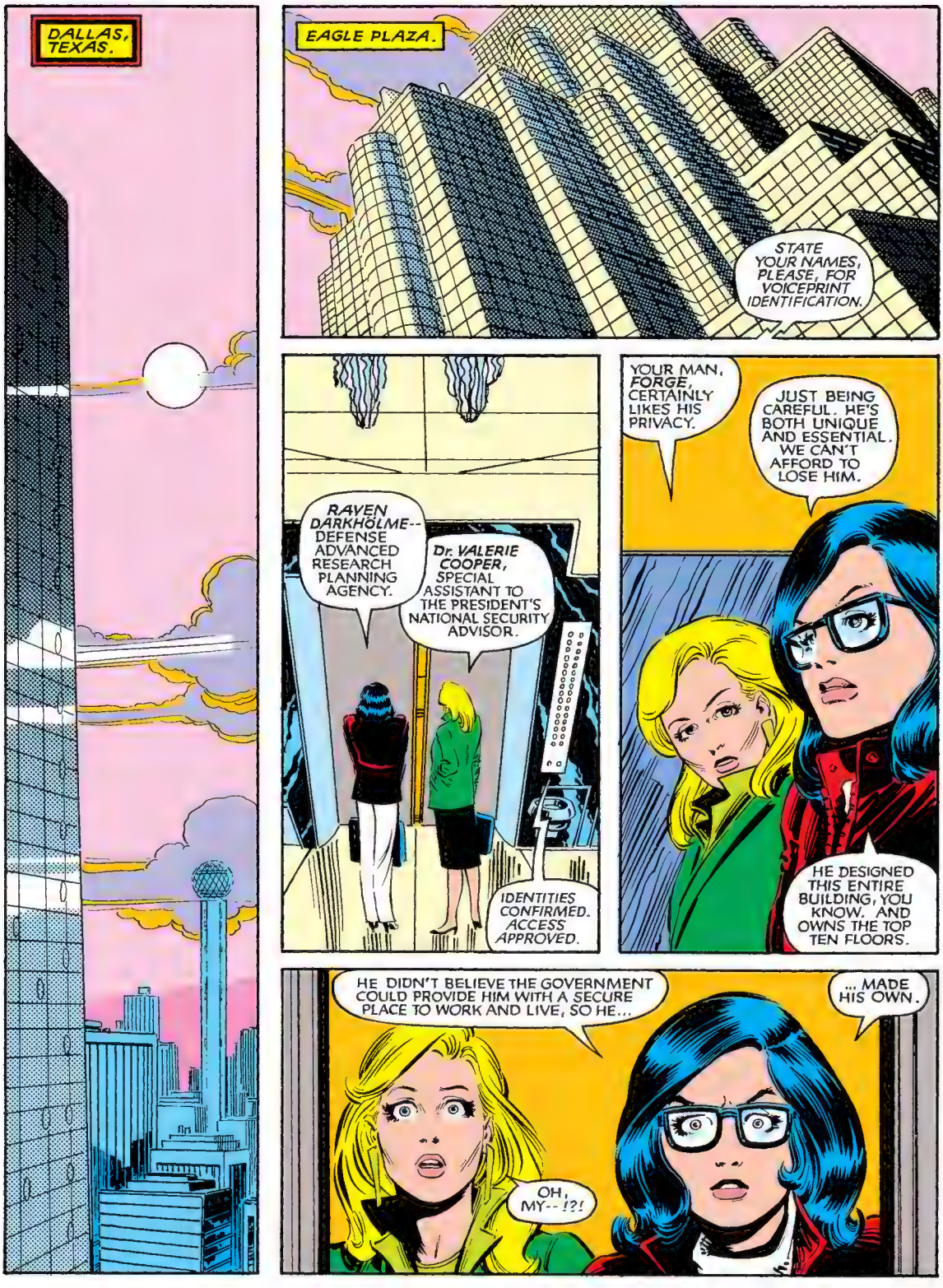
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
J.R.JR. + DIG


DALLAS, TEXAS.
EAGLE PLAZA.
STATE YOUR NAMES, PLEASE, FOR VOICEPRINT IDENTIFICATION.
RAVEN DARKHÖLME-- DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PLANNING AGENCY.
Dr. VALERIE COOPER, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR.
IDENTITIES CONFIRMED. ACCESS APPROVED.
YOUR MAN, FORGE, CERTAINLY LIKES HIS PRIVACY.
JUST BEING CAREFUL. HE'S BOTH UNIQUE AND ESSENTIAL. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE HIM.
HE DESIGNED THIS ENTIRE BUILDING, YOU KNOW. AND OWNS THE TOP TEN FLOORS.
HE DIDN'T BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT COULD PROVIDE HIM WITH A SECURE PLACE TO WORK AND LIVE, SO HE...
... MADE HIS OWN.
OH, MY-- !?!

STAN LEE PRESENTS...

THE PAST OF FUTURE DAYS

STARRING THE *UNCANNY* X-MEN
AND PRESENTED BY
CHRIS CLAREMONT
WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. & **DAN GREEN**
ARTISTS
GLYNIS WEIN, *colorist*
TOM ORZECHOWSKI, *letterer*
ANN NOCENTI, *EDITOR*
JIM SHOOTER, *EDITOR-IN-CHIEF*

A HOLOGRAM?!!

FAR MORE THAN THAT-- HE REPLICATES THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AS WELL. FEEL THE BREEZE, SMELL THE WILDFLOWERS? THIS TRULY IS THE NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE.

WATCH YOUR STEP, THOUGH. THOSE PLATFORMS YOU SEE ARE FREE-FLOATING.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO GET CONFUSED AND FALL OFF.

IT CAN BE A NASTY DROP-- THIS PENTHOUSE IS FIVE STORIES TALL.

WHERE'S FORGE? I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO M--

YYIIII!!

WHAT IS IT, VAL?! WHAT'S WRONG?!!

I'M SORRY-- ANOTHER ILLUSION, RIGHT?

I FEEL SO FOOLISH-- CRYING OUT LIKE THAT-- BUT IT SEEMED SO *REAL!*

BELIEVE ME, I UNDERSTAND. DURING MY FIRST VISIT, FORGE SCARED ME HALF TO DEATH.

FORTUNATELY, YOU GET USED TO IT-- AND HIM.

LISTEN, I HEAR SOMETHING!

YOU DON'T NEED MY TELLING YOU, YOU CAN SEE THE SIGNS FOR YOURSELF!

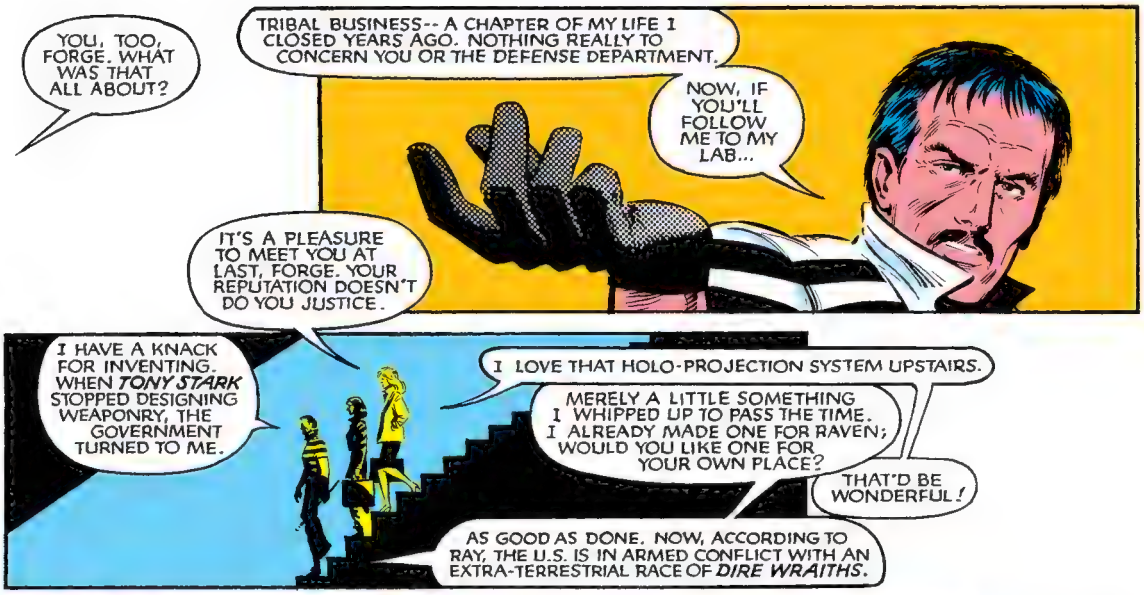
THE ANCIENT PATTERNS ARE BEING BROKEN, THE PROPER ORDER OF THINGS OVERTURNED! THE FABRIC OF *LIFE ITSELF* IS UNRAVELLING!

SO?

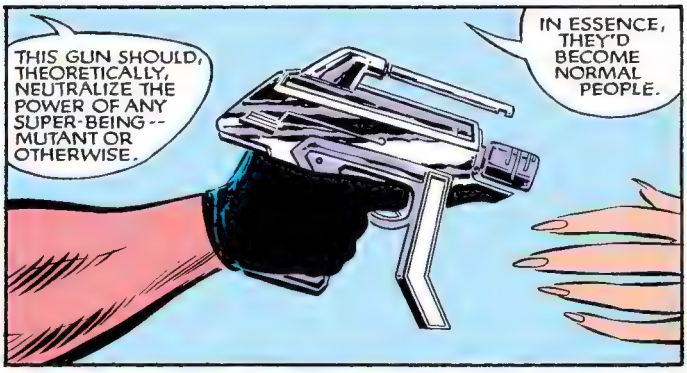
YOU ALONE POSSESS THE POWER TO PUT MATTERS RIGHT. IT IS *YOUR* RESPONSIBILITY, YOUR *SACRED DUTY!*

ONCE, PERHAPS. BUT NO LONGER.

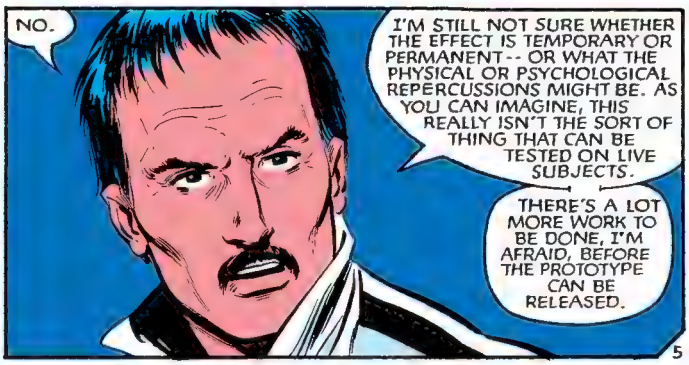
FIND OTHERS TO TAKE MY PLACE, NAŻE.
WE TRIED! THEY DID THEIR BEST!
NOTHING REMAINS OF THEM SAVE THEIR BLEACHED BONES!
YOU CANNOT HIDE FROM YOUR DESTINY!
I DON'T. I SIMPLY DENY IT.
FOOL! YOUR COWARDICE WILL DOOM ALL YOU HOLD DEAR!
BUT SUPPOSE, MY OLD FRIEND, A MAN HOLDS NOTHING DEAR-- AND DOES NOT CARE?
KLIK
THE HOLOGRAM-- IT'S GONE!
GOOD AFTERNOON, LADIES, AND WELCOME TO MY HOUSE.
I'M FORGE.
MY APOLOGIES FOR NAŻE. HE HAS A GOOD HEART, BUT HIS PASSIONS OCCASIONALLY GET THE BETTER OF HIM. I'VE KNOWN HIM MY ENTIRE LIFE. SOMETIMES, HE FORGETS I'M NO LONGER A CHILD-- OR HIS PUPIL.
YOU LOOK WELL, RAY.

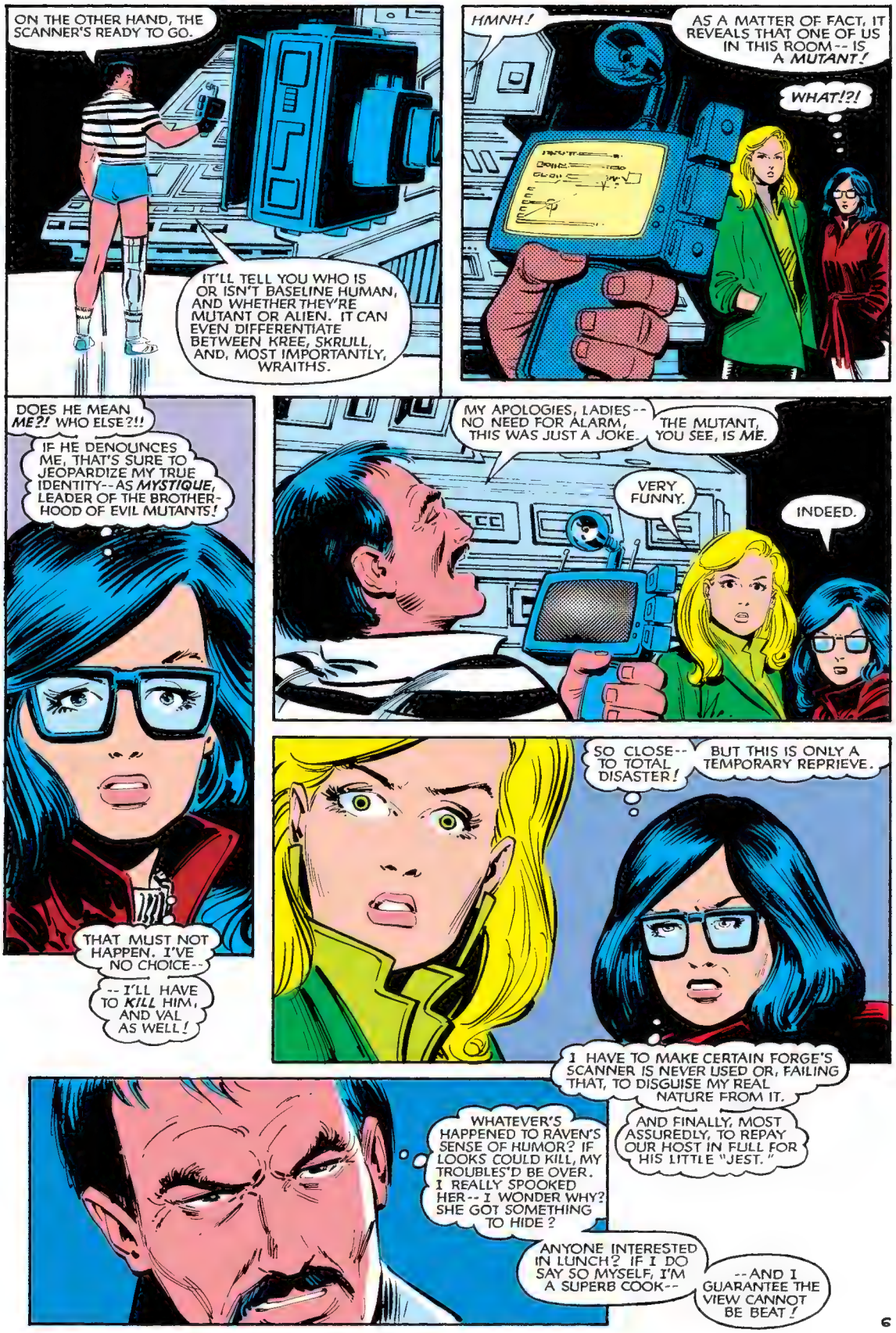

YOU, TOO, FORGE. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
TRIBAL BUSINESS-- A CHAPTER OF MY LIFE I CLOSED YEARS AGO. NOTHING REALLY TO CONCERN YOU OR THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.
NOW, IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME TO MY LAB...
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU AT LAST, FORGE. YOUR REPUTATION DOESN'T DO YOU JUSTICE.
I HAVE A KNACK FOR INVENTING. WHEN TONY STARK STOPPED DESIGNING WEAPONRY, THE GOVERNMENT TURNED TO ME.
I LOVE THAT HOLO-PROJECTION SYSTEM UPSTAIRS.
MERELY A LITTLE SOMETHING I WHIPPED UP TO PASS THE TIME. I ALREADY MADE ONE FOR RAVEN; WOULD YOU LIKE ONE FOR YOUR OWN PLACE?
THAT'D BE WONDERFUL!
AS GOOD AS DONE. NOW, ACCORDING TO RAY, THE U.S. IS IN ARMED CONFLICT WITH AN EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL RACE OF DIRE WRAITHS.

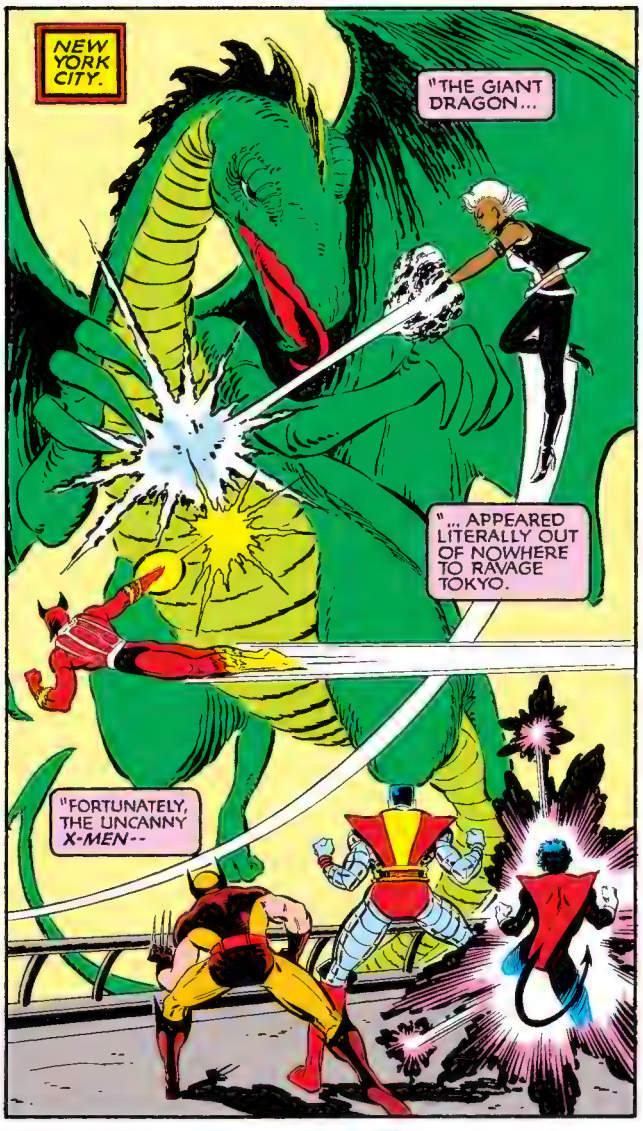
THEIR ARCHFOE, THE SPACEKNIGHT ROM, USES AN ANALYZER TO LOCATE THESE BEINGS, AND A NEUTRALIZER, WHICH BANISHES 'EM TO AN OTHER-DIMENSIONAL LIMBO.
HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF BUILT-IN FAIL-SAFE MECHANISMS, WE ARE UNABLE TO EXAMINE-- MUCH LESS COPY--ROM'S WEAPONS.
MY BRIEF WAS TO DUPLICATE THEM BOTH.
AND HAVE YOU?
IN PART.

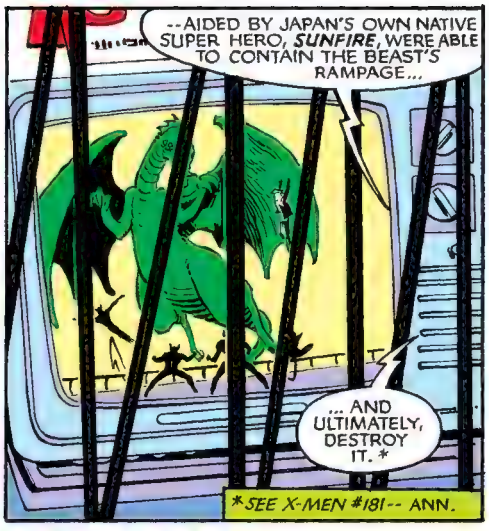

THIS GUN SHOULD, THEORETICALLY, NEUTRALIZE THE POWER OF ANY SUPER-BEING-- MUTANT OR OTHERWISE.
IN ESSENCE, THEY'D BECOME NORMAL PEOPLE.

EXCELLENT! HAS IT BEEN TESTED?

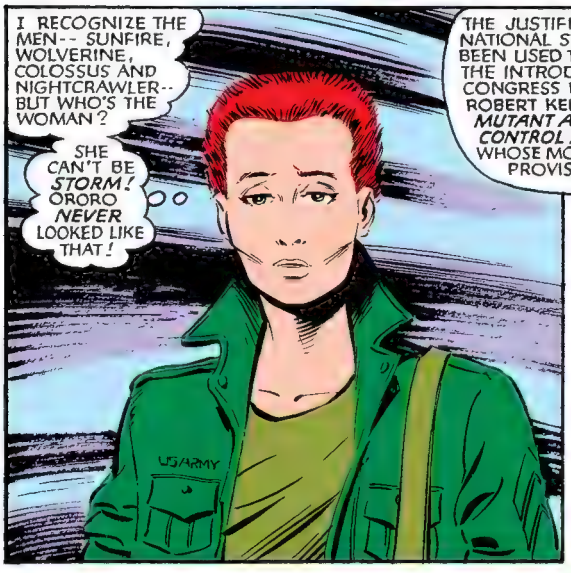

NO.
I'M STILL NOT SURE WHETHER THE EFFECT IS TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT-- OR WHAT THE PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS MIGHT BE. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THIS REALLY ISN'T THE SORT OF THING THAT CAN BE TESTED ON LIVE SUBJECTS.
THERE'S A LOT MORE WORK TO BE DONE, I'M AFRAID, BEFORE THE PROTOTYPE CAN BE RELEASED.

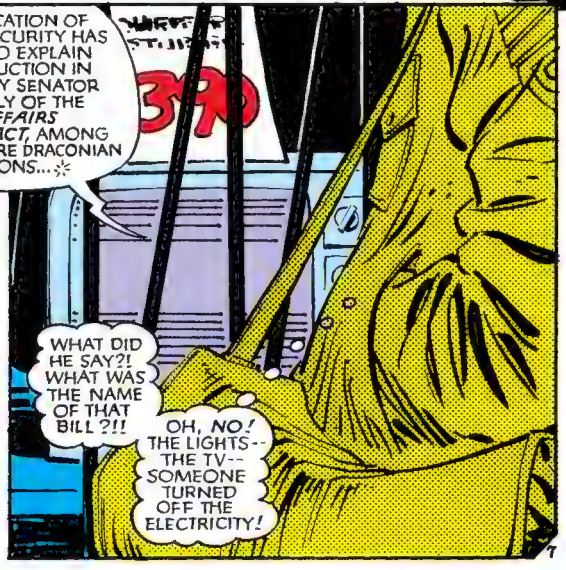

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SCANNER'S READY TO GO.
IT'LL TELL YOU WHO IS OR ISN'T BASELINE HUMAN, AND WHETHER THEY'RE MUTANT OR ALIEN. IT CAN EVEN DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN KREE, SKRULL, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, WRAITHS.
HMNH!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT REVEALS THAT ONE OF US IN THIS ROOM -- IS A MUTANT!
WHAT!?!
DOES HE MEAN ME?! WHO ELSE?!!
IF HE DENOUNCES ME, THAT'S SURE TO JEOPARDIZE MY TRUE IDENTITY -- AS MYSTIQUE, LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS!
THAT MUST NOT HAPPEN. I'VE NO CHOICE --
-- I'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM, AND VAL AS WELL!
MY APOLOGIES, LADIES -- NO NEED FOR ALARM, THIS WAS JUST A JOKE.
THE MUTANT, YOU SEE, IS ME.
VERY FUNNY.
INDEED.
SO CLOSE -- TO TOTAL DISASTER!
BUT THIS IS ONLY A TEMPORARY REPRIEVE.
I HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN FORGE'S SCANNER IS NEVER USED OR, FAILING THAT, TO DISGUISE MY REAL NATURE FROM IT.
AND FINALLY, MOST ASSUREDLY, TO REPAY OUR HOST IN FULL FOR HIS LITTLE "JEST."
WHATEVER'S HAPPENED TO RAVEN'S SENSE OF HUMOR? IF LOOKS COULD KILL, MY TROUBLES'D BE OVER. I REALLY SPOOKED HER -- I WONDER WHY? SHE GOT SOMETHING TO HIDE?
ANYONE INTERESTED IN LUNCH? IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF, I'M A SUPERB COOK --
-- AND I GUARANTEE THE VIEW CANNOT BE BEAT!

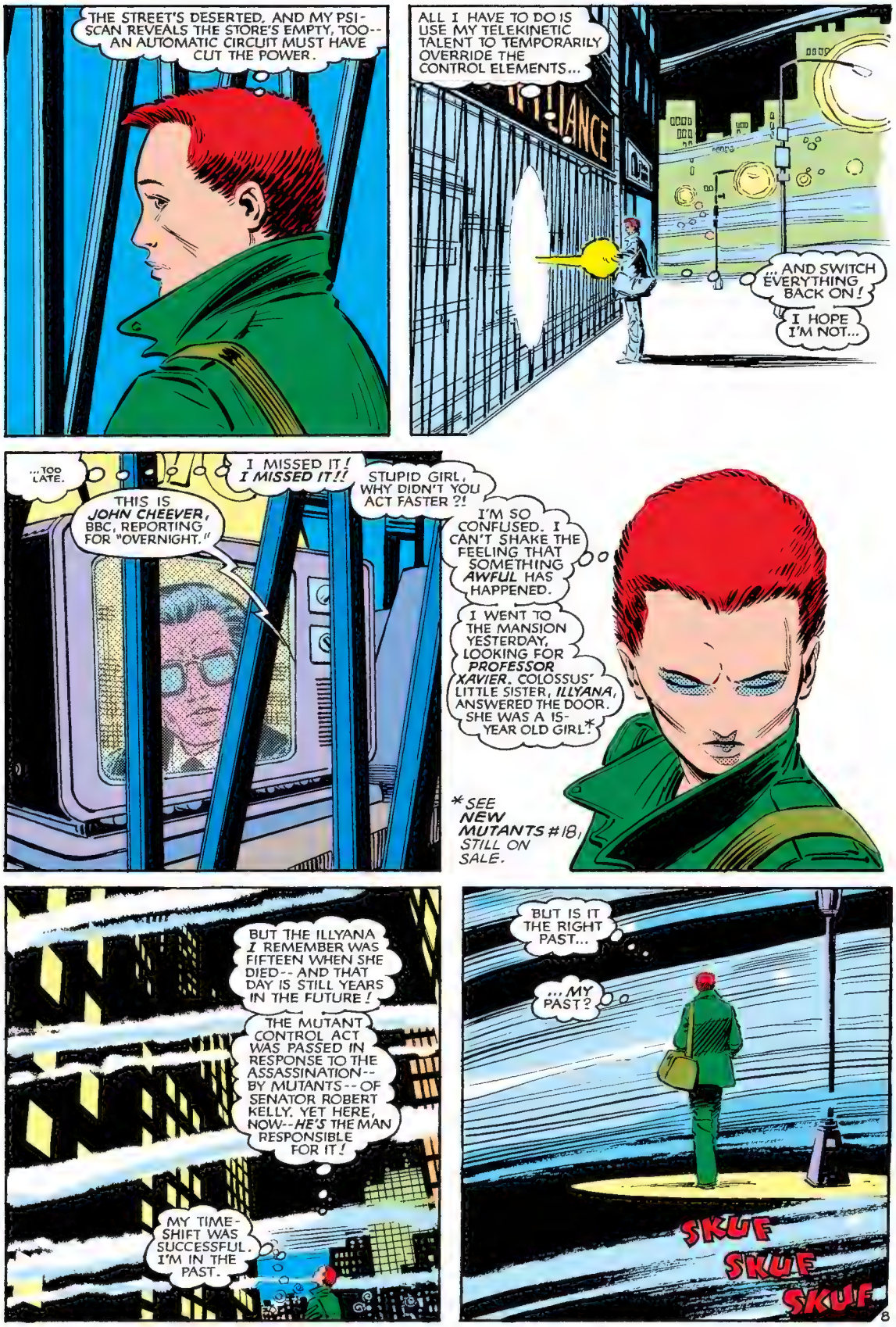

NEW YORK CITY.
"THE GIANT DRAGON...
"...APPEARED LITERALLY OUT OF NOWHERE TO RAVAGE TOKYO.
"FORTUNATELY, THE UNCANNY X-MEN--

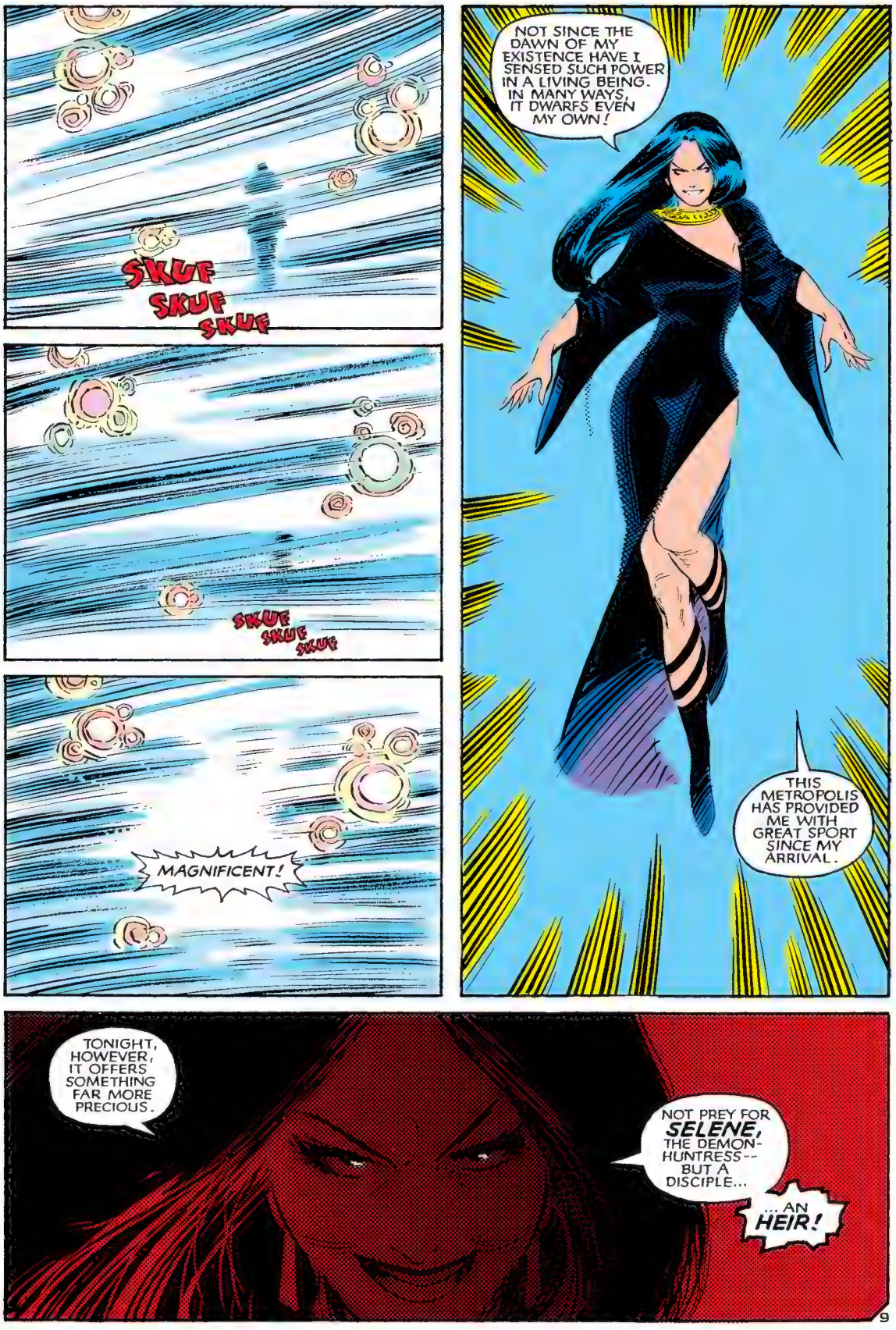

--AIDED BY JAPAN'S OWN NATIVE SUPER HERO, SUNFIRE, WERE ABLE TO CONTAIN THE BEAST'S RAMPAGE...
...AND ULTIMATELY, DESTROY IT.*
*SEE X-MEN #181-- ANN.

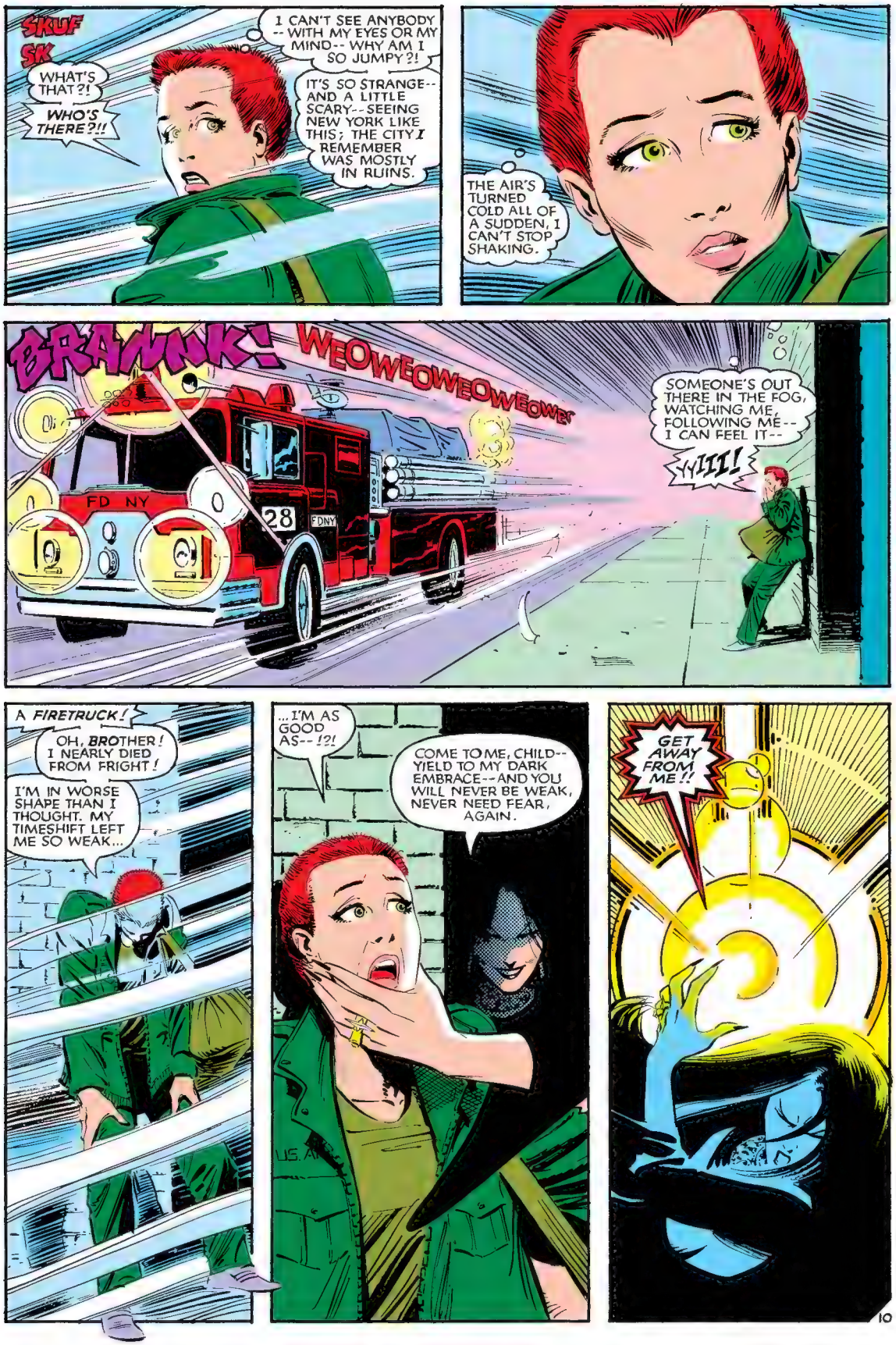
BORELLI ELECTRO
MANY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED CONCERNING MUTANTS SUCH AS THE X-MEN -- PEOPLE WONDER IF THEY ARE A THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES, OR HUMANITY ITSELF-- YET NONE CAN DENY THAT...
...WITHOUT THEIR TIMELY INTERVENTION, JAPAN'S CAPITAL MIGHT HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED AND COUNTLESS THOUSANDS KILLED.


I RECOGNIZE THE MEN-- SUNFIRE, WOLVERINE, COLOSSUS AND NIGHTCRAWLER-- BUT WHO'S THE WOMAN?
SHE CAN'T BE STORM! ORORO NEVER LOOKED LIKE THAT!
US ARMY

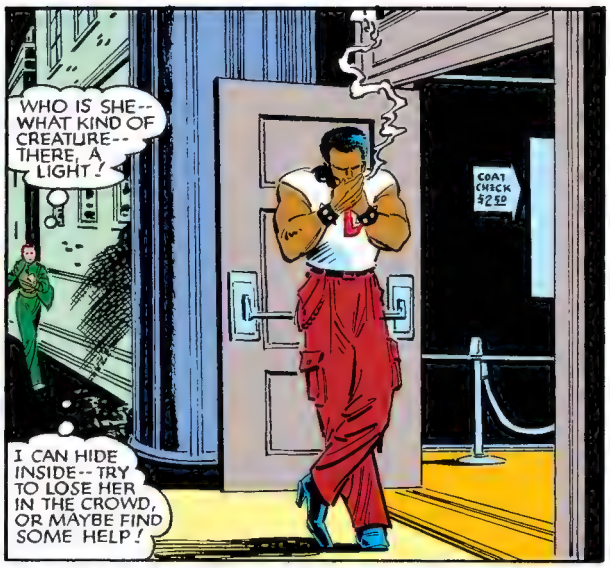

THE JUSTIFICATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY HAS BEEN USED TO EXPLAIN THE INTRODUCTION IN CONGRESS BY SENATOR ROBERT KELLY OF THE MUTANT AFFAIRS CONTROL ACT, AMONG WHOSE MORE DRACONIAN PROVISIONS...
WHAT DID HE SAY?! WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THAT BILL?!!
OH, NO! THE LIGHTS-- THE TV-- SOMEONE TURNED OFF THE ELECTRICITY!

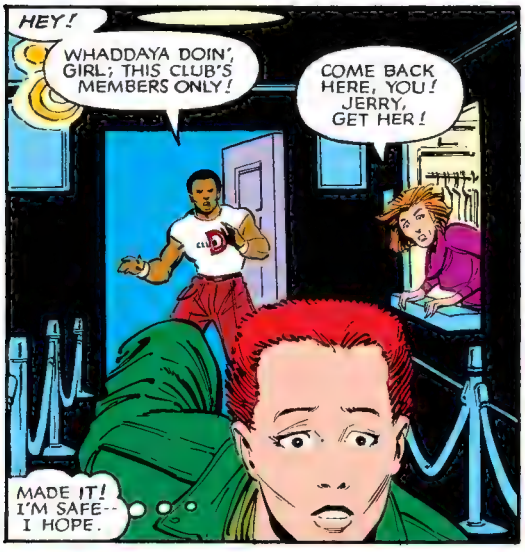

THE STREET'S DESERTED, AND MY PSI-SCAN REVEALS THE STORE'S EMPTY, TOO-- AN AUTOMATIC CIRCUIT MUST HAVE CUT THE POWER.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS USE MY TELEKINETIC TALENT TO TEMPORARILY OVERRIDE THE CONTROL ELEMENTS...
...AND SWITCH EVERYTHING BACK ON!
I HOPE I'M NOT...
...TOO LATE.
I MISSED IT! I MISSED IT!!
STUPID GIRL, WHY DIDN'T YOU ACT FASTER?!
THIS IS JOHN CHEEVER, BBC, REPORTING FOR "OVERNIGHT."
I'M SO CONFUSED. I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT SOMETHING AWFUL HAS HAPPENED.
I WENT TO THE MANSION YESTERDAY, LOOKING FOR PROFESSOR XAVIER. COLOSSUS' LITTLE SISTER, ILLYANA, ANSWERED THE DOOR. SHE WAS A 15-YEAR OLD GIRL!*
*SEE NEW MUTANTS #18, STILL ON SALE.
BUT THE ILLYANA I REMEMBER WAS FIFTEEN WHEN SHE DIED-- AND THAT DAY IS STILL YEARS IN THE FUTURE!
THE MUTANT CONTROL ACT WAS PASSED IN RESPONSE TO THE ASSASSINATION-- BY MUTANTS-- OF SENATOR ROBERT KELLY. YET HERE, NOW--HE'S THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR IT!
MY TIME-SHIFT WAS SUCCESSFUL. I'M IN THE PAST.
BUT IS IT THE RIGHT PAST...
...MY PAST?
SKUF
SKUF
SKUF


SKUF SKUF SKUF
SKUF SKUF SKUF
MAGNIFICENT!
NOT SINCE THE DAWN OF MY EXISTENCE HAVE I SENSED SUCH POWER IN A LIVING BEING. IN MANY WAYS, IT DWARFS EVEN MY OWN!
THIS METROPOLIS HAS PROVIDED ME WITH GREAT SPORT SINCE MY ARRIVAL.
TONIGHT, HOWEVER, IT OFFERS SOMETHING FAR MORE PRECIOUS.
NOT PREY FOR SELENE, THE DEMON-HUNTRESS-- BUT A DISCIPLE...
...AN HEIR!


SKUF
SK
WHAT'S THAT?!
WHO'S THERE?!!
I CAN'T SEE ANYBODY -- WITH MY EYES OR MY MIND-- WHY AM I SO JUMPY?!
IT'S SO STRANGE-- AND A LITTLE SCARY-- SEEING NEW YORK LIKE THIS; THE CITY I REMEMBER WAS MOSTLY IN RUINS.
THE AIR'S TURNED COLD ALL OF A SUDDEN, I CAN'T STOP SHAKING.
BRAAAAK!
WEOWEOWEOWEOWEE
FD NY
28
FDNY
SOMEONE'S OUT THERE IN THE FOG, WATCHING ME, FOLLOWING ME-- I CAN FEEL IT--
AYIII!
A FIRETRUCK!
OH, BROTHER! I NEARLY DIED FROM FRIGHT!
I'M IN WORSE SHAPE THAN I THOUGHT. MY TIMESHIFT LEFT ME SO WEAK...
...I'M AS GOOD AS--!?!
COME TO ME, CHILD-- YIELD TO MY DARK EMBRACE--AND YOU WILL NEVER BE WEAK, NEVER NEED FEAR, AGAIN.
GET AWAY FROM ME!!

HER HUNGER-- SO STRONG IN HER MIND-- SHE WANTS MY LIFE!
I'M NO MATCH FOR HER-- I'VE GOT TO RUN!


WHO IS SHE-- WHAT KIND OF CREATURE-- THERE, A LIGHT!
COAT CHECK $2.50
I CAN HIDE INSIDE-- TRY TO LOSE HER IN THE CROWD, OR MAYBE FIND SOME HELP!

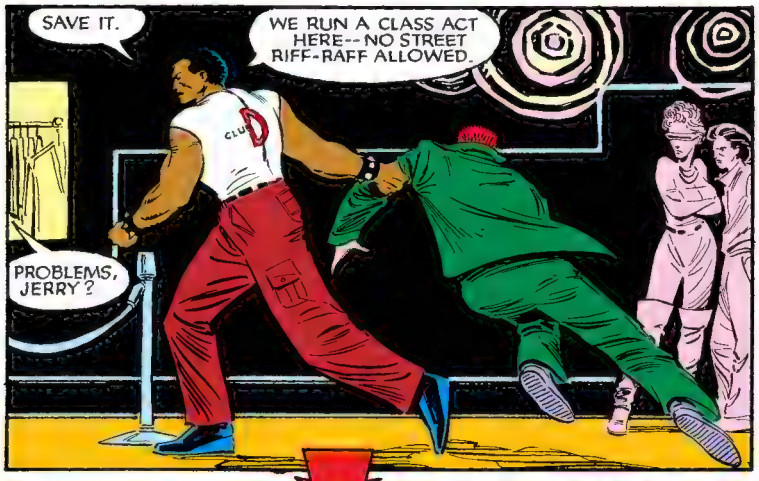

HEY!
WHADDAYA DOIN', GIRL; THIS CLUB'S MEMBERS ONLY!
COME BACK HERE, YOU! JERRY, GET HER!
MADE IT! I'M SAFE-- I HOPE.

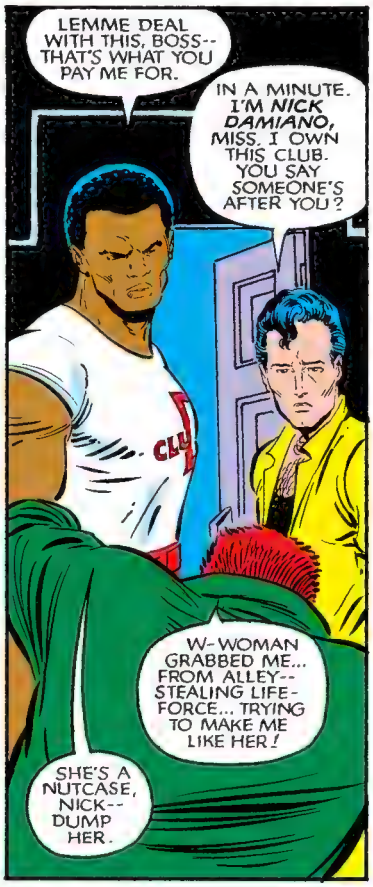
I'M TONY...
...JERK...
...BACK-BREAKER...
...HUNK...
...SO THEN I...
...CUT IT OUT...
...DO THAT AGAIN...
MY FOOT--!

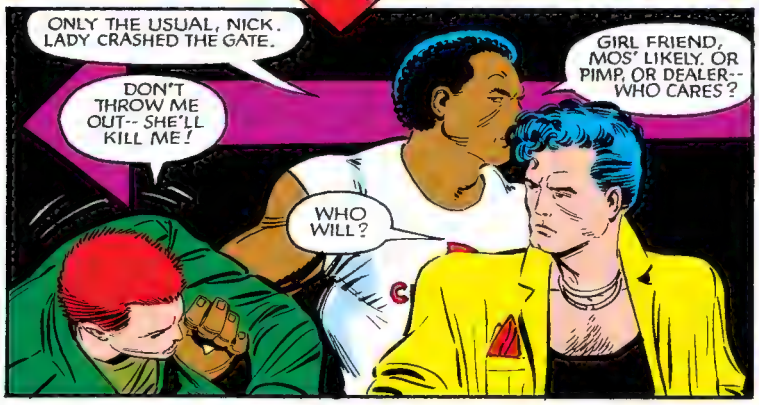
...SOMEONE FELL...
...GIRL...
...BOY...
...SHE/HE HURT...
...NO CLASS...
...MY BAG!...
TOO MANY THOUGHTS-- TOO CLOSE, TOO INTENSE--
-- MY PSI-SHIELDS AREN'T WORKING!

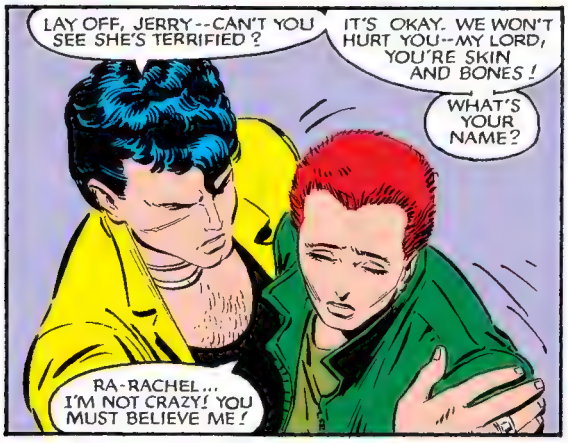
...I'D LIKE TO...
...RACHEL...
...SHE'S ALONE...
...CUTE...
...A DOG...
...YUM...
...BLAH...
THAT VOICE-- THE VAMPIRE!
I CAN'T BLOCK THEM OUT OF MY MIND!

NO!
ON YER FEET, HONEY, SHOWTIME'S OVER!
GIMME ANY GRIEF, AN' I'LL BREAK YER ARM!
PLEASE... LET ME EXPLAIN--!

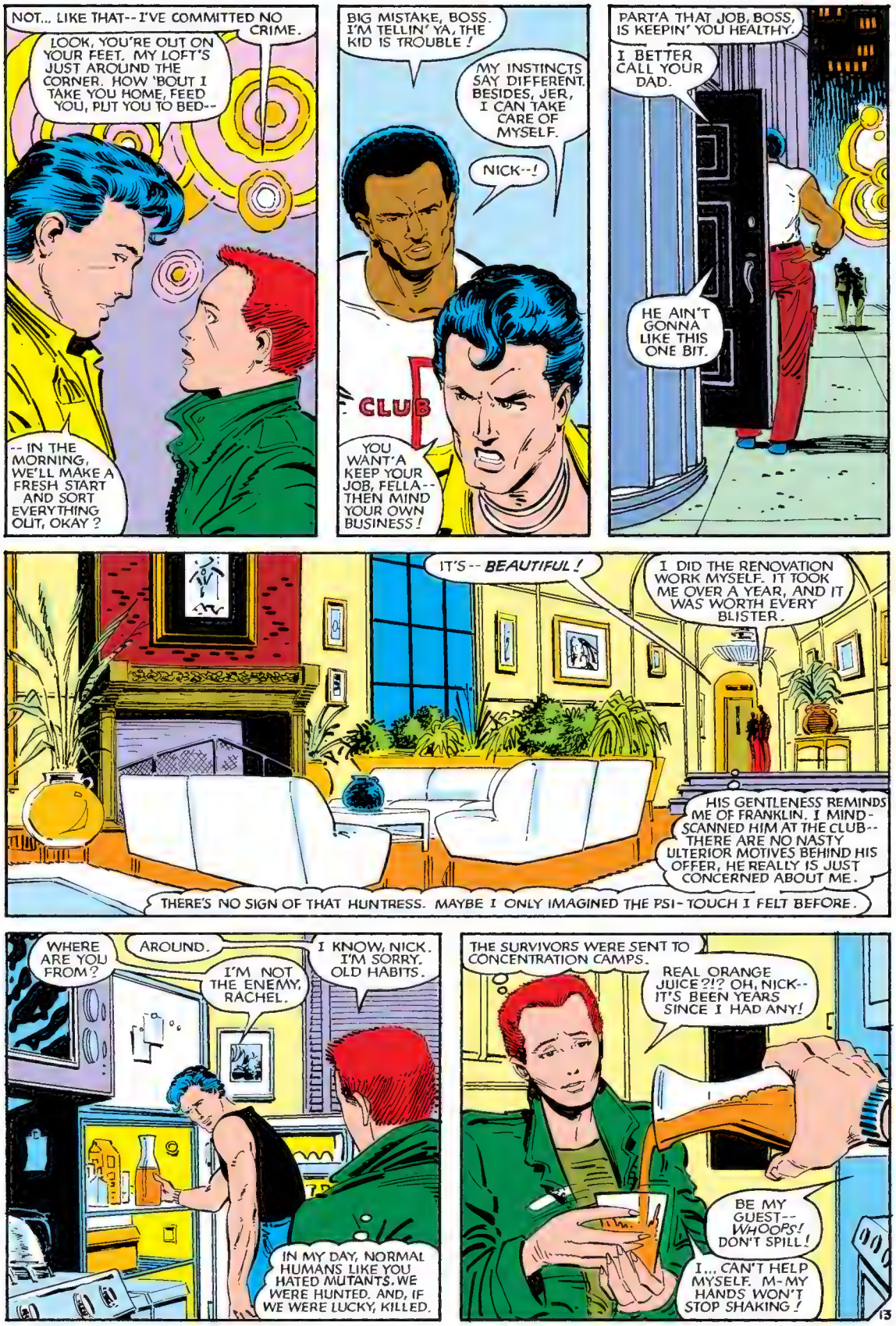

SAVE IT.
WE RUN A CLASS ACT HERE--NO STREET RIFF-RAFF ALLOWED.
PROBLEMS, JERRY?


LEMME DEAL WITH THIS, BOSS--THAT'S WHAT YOU PAY ME FOR.
IN A MINUTE. I'M NICK DAMIANO, MISS. I OWN THIS CLUB. YOU SAY SOMEONE'S AFTER YOU?
W-WOMAN GRABBED ME... FROM ALLEY--STEALING LIFE-FORCE... TRYING TO MAKE ME LIKE HER!
SHE'S A NUTCASE, NICK--DUMP HER.

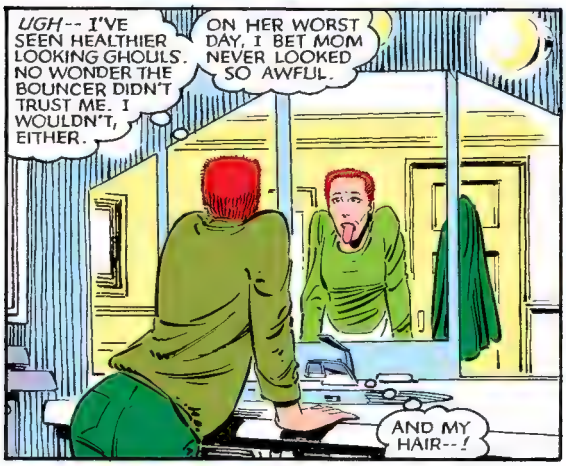

ONLY THE USUAL, NICK. LADY CRASHED THE GATE.
DON'T THROW ME OUT-- SHE'LL KILL ME!
GIRL FRIEND, MOS' LIKELY. OR PIMP, OR DEALER--WHO CARES?
WHO WILL?

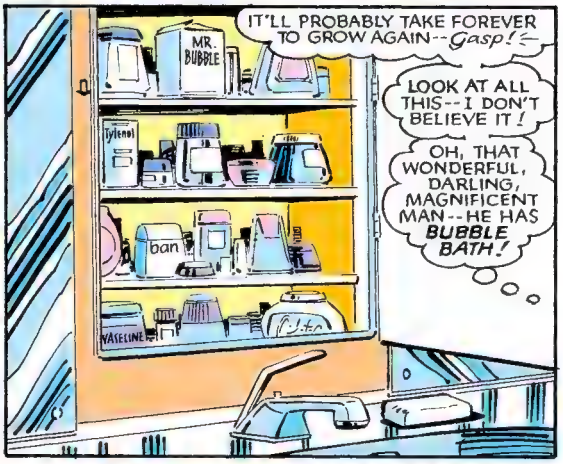

LAY OFF, JERRY--CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S TERRIFIED?
IT'S OKAY. WE WON'T HURT YOU--MY LORD, YOU'RE SKIN AND BONES!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
RA-RACHEL... I'M NOT CRAZY! YOU MUST BELIEVE ME!

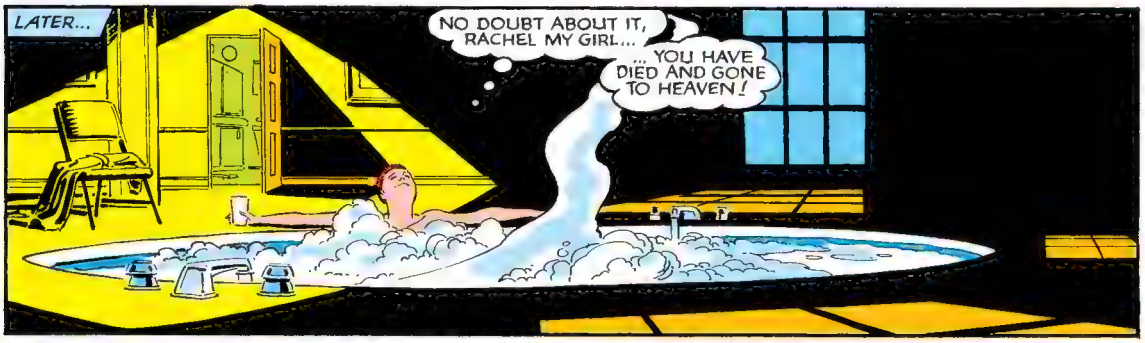
I JUST CHECKED THE STREET, BOSS. NO ONE'S THERE.
CALL THE PRECINCT, HAVE 'EM SEND A CAR...
NO! NO POLICE!
WHY NOT, LADY? YOU ONNA RUN?!
CLUB


NOT... LIKE THAT--I'VE COMMITTED NO CRIME.
LOOK, YOU'RE OUT ON YOUR FEET. MY LOFT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER. HOW 'BOUT I TAKE YOU HOME, FEED YOU, PUT YOU TO BED--
-- IN THE MORNING, WE'LL MAKE A FRESH START AND SORT EVERYTHING OUT, OKAY?
BIG MISTAKE, BOSS. I'M TELLIN' YA, THE KID IS TROUBLE!
MY INSTINCTS SAY DIFFERENT. BESIDES, JER, I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
NICK--!
CLUB
YOU WANT'A KEEP YOUR JOB, FELLA--THEN MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!
PART'A THAT JOB, BOSS, IS KEEPIN' YOU HEALTHY.
I BETTER CALL YOUR DAD.
HE AIN'T GONNA LIKE THIS ONE BIT.
IT'S -- BEAUTIFUL!
I DID THE RENOVATION WORK MYSELF. IT TOOK ME OVER A YEAR, AND IT WAS WORTH EVERY BLISTER.
HIS GENTLENESS REMINDS ME OF FRANKLIN. I MIND-SCANNED HIM AT THE CLUB--THERE ARE NO NASTY ULTERIOR MOTIVES BEHIND HIS OFFER, HE REALLY IS JUST CONCERNED ABOUT ME.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THAT HUNTRESS. MAYBE I ONLY IMAGINED THE PSI-TOUCH I FELT BEFORE.
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
AROUND.
I'M NOT THE ENEMY, RACHEL.
I KNOW, NICK. I'M SORRY. OLD HABITS.
IN MY DAY, NORMAL HUMANS LIKE YOU HATED MUTANTS. WE WERE HUNTED. AND, IF WE WERE LUCKY, KILLED.
THE SURVIVORS WERE SENT TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS.
REAL ORANGE JUICE?!? OH, NICK--IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I HAD ANY!
BE MY GUEST--WHOOPS! DON'T SPILL!
I... CAN'T HELP MYSELF. M-MY HANDS WON'T STOP SHAKING!

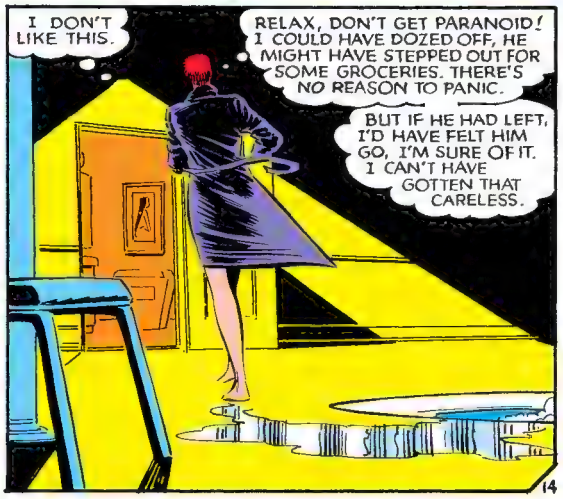
"I MADE A MESS. I'M SORRY."
FORGET IT-- AND DON'T WORRY. THERE'S PLENTY MORE.
RIGHT NOW, HOWEVER, DOC DAMIANO'S PRESCRIPTION IS A LONG SOAK IN A HOT TUB, WHILE HE FIXES DINNER. I ASSUME YOU'RE HUNGRY.
STARVED!
FOLLOW ME, THEN; I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE EVERYTHING IS. AFTER THAT, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.


UGH-- I'VE SEEN HEALTHIER LOOKING GHOULS. NO WONDER THE BOUNCER DIDN'T TRUST ME. I WOULDN'T, EITHER.
ON HER WORST DAY, I BET MOM NEVER LOOKED SO AWFUL.
AND MY HAIR--!

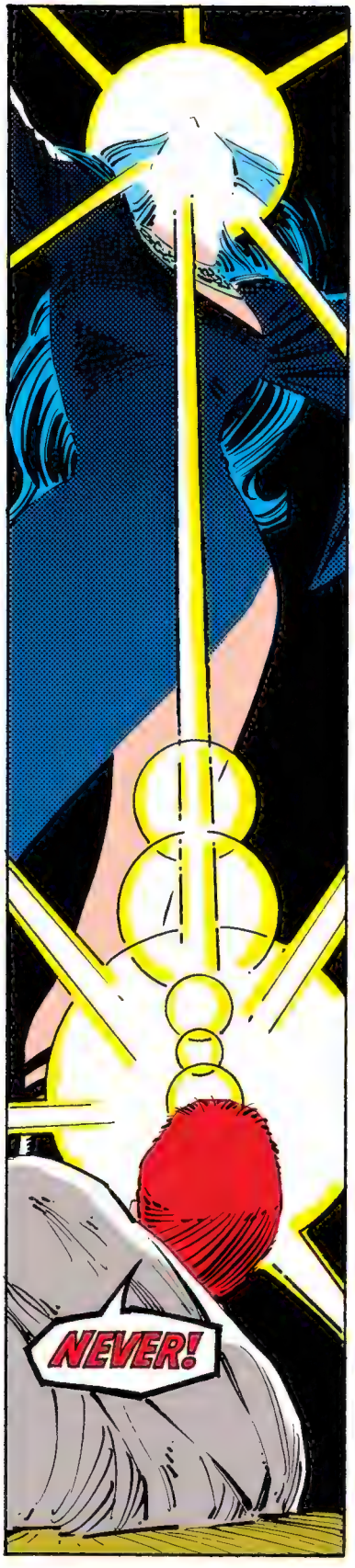

IT'LL PROBABLY TAKE FOREVER TO GROW AGAIN--Gasp!
LOOK AT ALL THIS--I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
OH, THAT WONDERFUL, DARLING, MAGNIFICENT MAN--HE HAS BUBBLE BATH!
MR. BUBBLE
Tylenol
ban
VASELINE

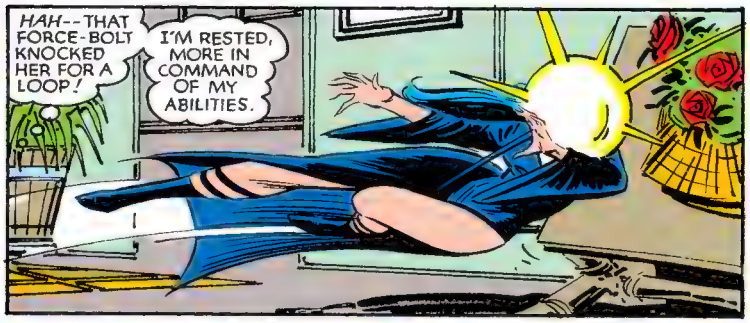

LATER...
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, RACHEL MY GIRL...
... YOU HAVE DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN!

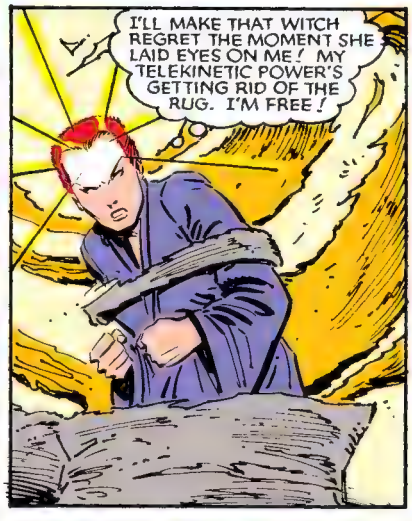
Hnh?!?
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT!
NICK? NICK?!
NO ANSWER -- AND I CAN'T SENSE HIS THOUGHTS ANYMORE!


I DON'T LIKE THIS.
RELAX, DON'T GET PARANOID! I COULD HAVE DOZED OFF, HE MIGHT HAVE STEPPED OUT FOR SOME GROCERIES. THERE'S NO REASON TO PANIC.
BUT IF HE HAD LEFT, I'D HAVE FELT HIM GO, I'M SURE OF IT. I CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN THAT CARELESS.

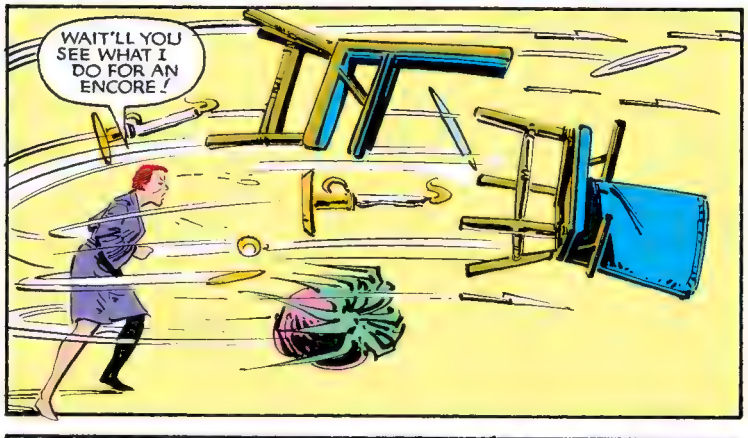
IS ANYBODY-- NICK!
GEE-- CANDLES AND WINE. HE'S GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE. THAT'S NICE.
BUT WHY WON'T HE ANSWER?
AND WHY CAN'T I HEAR HIS THOUGHTS?
DID THE TIMESHIFT CAUSE LONGTERM EFFECTS-- HAS IT CRIPPLED MY PSI-TALENT?! THAT'S SOMETHING I DIDN'T BARGAIN FOR.
NICK, ARE YOU--!?!
HE'S DEAD!
THE RUG-- WHAT'S IT DOING?!
DID YOU TRULY BELIEVE, DEAR RACHEL, THAT I WOULD ALLOW YOU TO ESCAPE?
YOU!
MURDERESS! WHY DID YOU KILL HIM?!
I AM A PREDATOR, CHILD. SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, HOMO SAPIENS HAS BEEN THE PREY OF THE DARK HUNTRESS-- SELENE!
VERY SOON NOW, IT SHALL BE YOURS AS WELL.


NEVER!

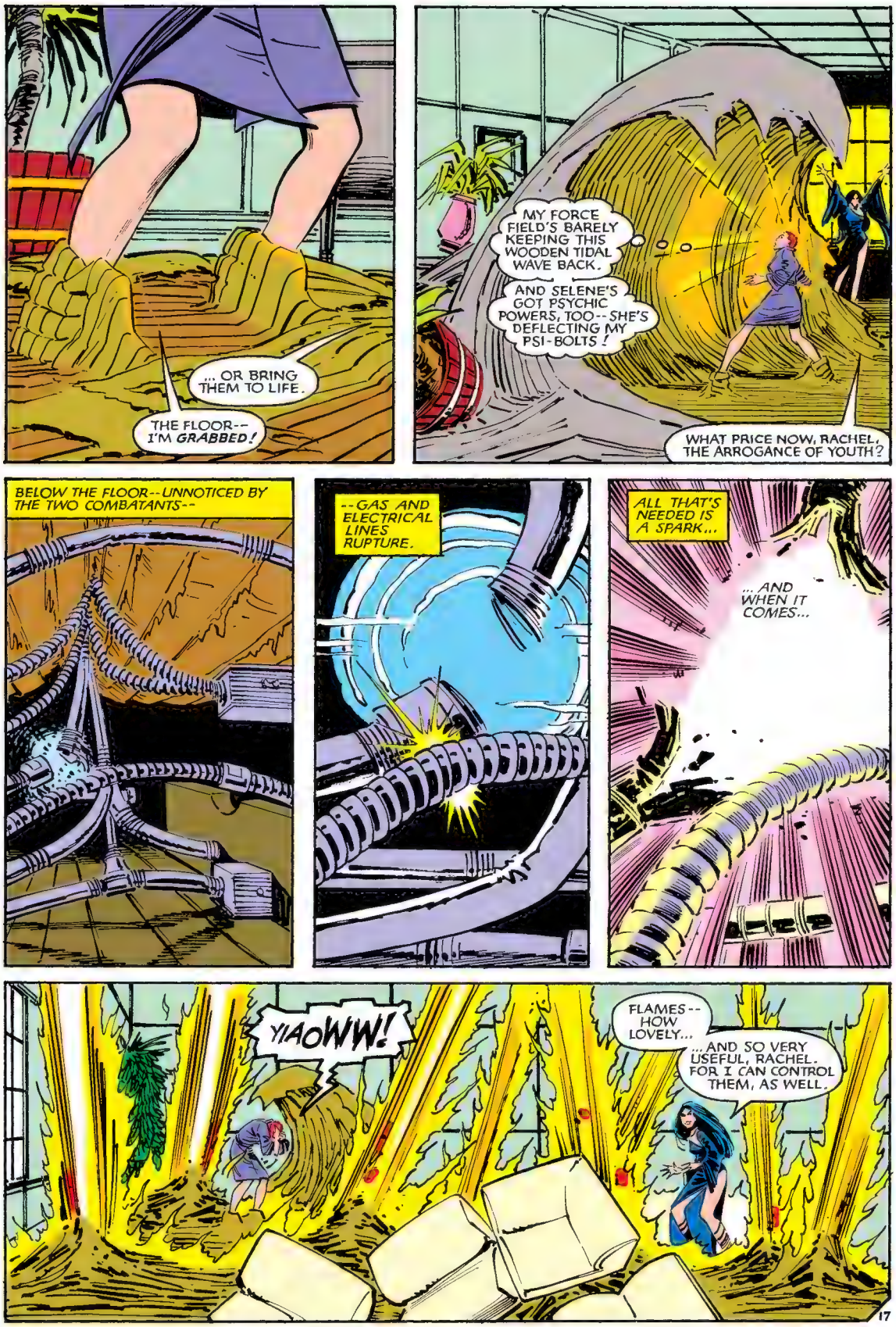

HAH--THAT FORCE-BOLT KNOCKED HER FOR A LOOP!
I'M RESTED, MORE IN COMMAND OF MY ABILITIES.


I'LL MAKE THAT WITCH REGRET THE MOMENT SHE LAID EYES ON ME! MY TELEKINETIC POWER'S GETTING RID OF THE RUG. I'M FREE!

MOST FORMIDABLE, CHILD. YOUR RESISTANCE AND ABILITIES SURPASS MY EXPECTATIONS.
I AM IMPRESSED.


WAIT'LL YOU SEE WHAT I DO FOR AN ENCORE!

I AM NOT WITHOUT RESOURCES MYSELF.
MY CONTROL OVER INANIMATE OBJECTS IS ABSOLUTE. I CAN REDUCE THEM TO DUST...


... OR BRING THEM TO LIFE.
THE FLOOR-- I'M GRABBED!
MY FORCE FIELD'S BARELY KEEPING THIS WOODEN TIDAL WAVE BACK.
AND SELENE'S GOT PSYCHIC POWERS, TOO-- SHE'S DEFLECTING MY PSI-BOLTS!
WHAT PRICE NOW, RACHEL, THE ARROGANCE OF YOUTH?
BELOW THE FLOOR--UNNOTICED BY THE TWO COMBATANTS--
--GAS AND ELECTRICAL LINES RUPTURE.
ALL THAT'S NEEDED IS A SPARK...
... AND WHEN IT COMES...
YIAOWW!
FLAMES-- HOW LOVELY...
...AND SO VERY USEFUL, RACHEL. FOR I CAN CONTROL THEM, AS WELL.

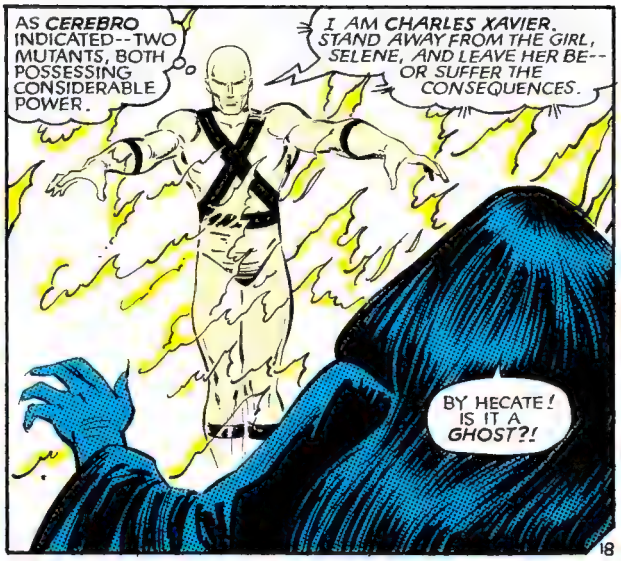
RESISTANCE IS USELESS, YOUR RAW POWER NO MATCH FOR MY EONS OF EXPERIENCE.
EMBRACE MY DARKNESS, RACHEL. BE ONE WITH ME. SAVOR IN FULL MEASURE THE JOY OF THE ETERNAL HUNT...
...THE ECSTACY OF-- THE KILL!

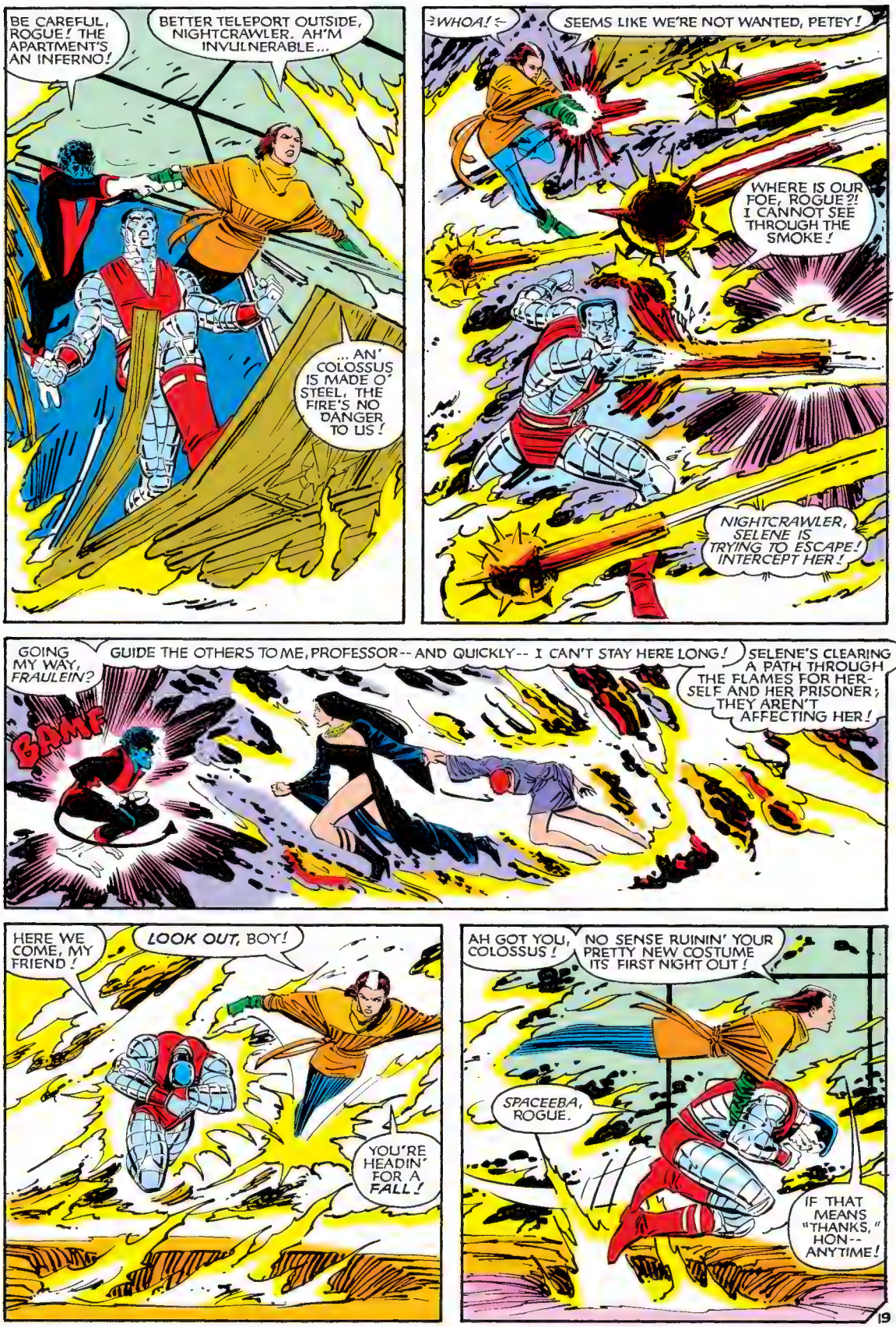
SHE'S PAST MY SHIELDS-- INSIDE MY MIND--
--TOO DEEP-- I CAN'T DRIVE HER OUT!

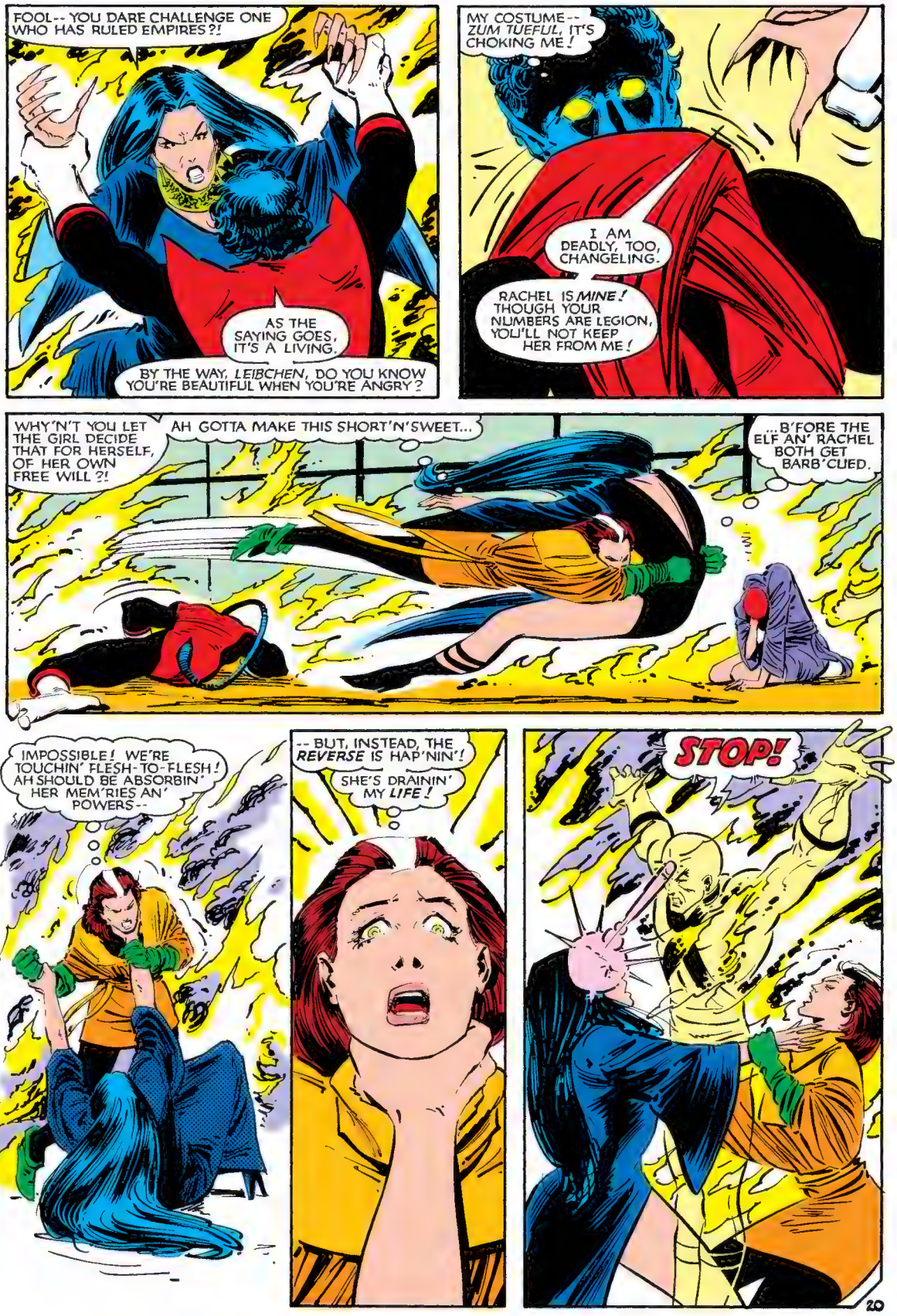
MY THOUGHTS -- BECOMING HERS!
I WON'T GIVE UP-- I CAN'T-- BUT WHAT AM I TO DO, HOW CAN I FIGHT HER, IT'S SO HARD!

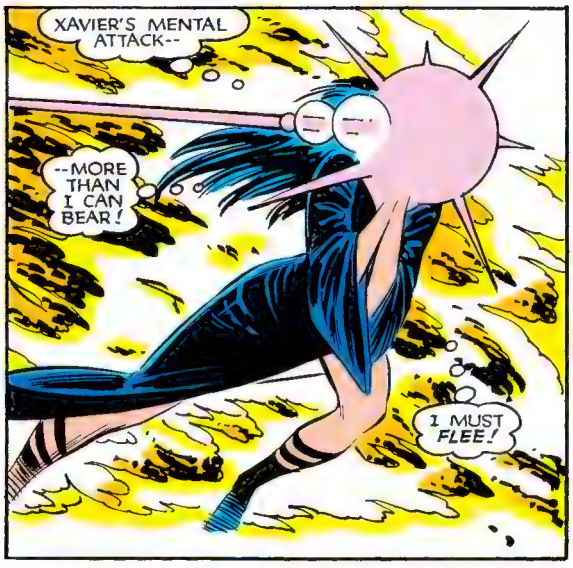
CHILD, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
PROFESSOR XAVIER?!?
SELENE-- SHE'S STEALING MY LIFE, MY SOUL! HURRY, PROFESSOR, FOLLOW MY THOUGHTS!

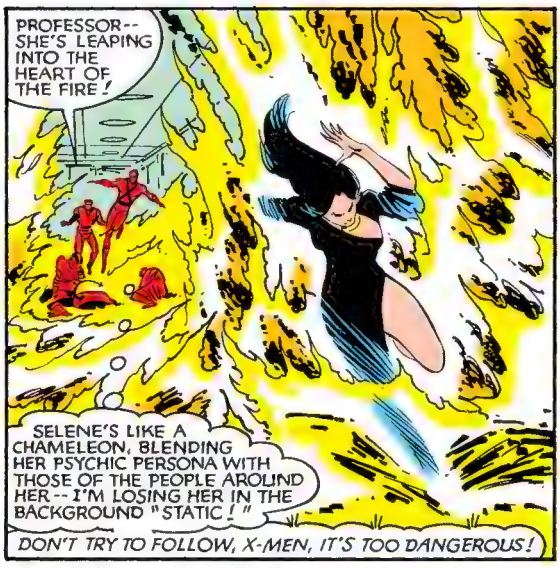
HELP ME!!

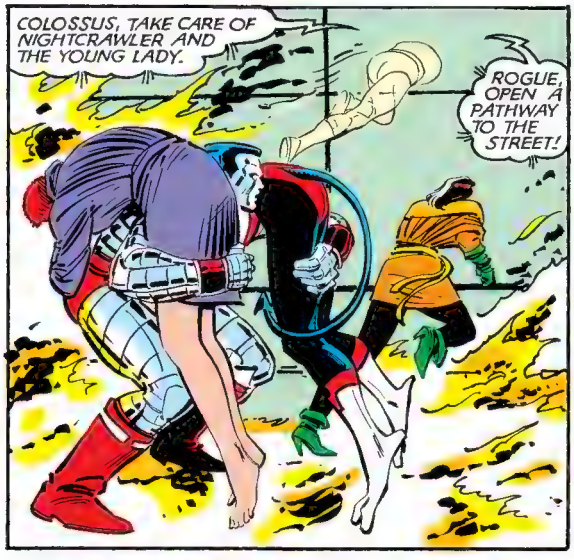

AS CEREBRO INDICATED--TWO MUTANTS, BOTH POSSESSING CONSIDERABLE POWER.
I AM CHARLES XAVIER. STAND AWAY FROM THE GIRL, SELENE, AND LEAVE HER BE-- OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.
BY HECATE! IS IT A GHOST?!


BE CAREFUL, ROGUE! THE APARTMENT'S AN INFERNO!
BETTER TELEPORT OUTSIDE, NIGHTCRAWLER. AH'M INVULNERABLE...
... AN' COLOSSUS IS MADE O' STEEL, THE FIRE'S NO DANGER TO US!
=WHOA!=
SEEMS LIKE WE'RE NOT WANTED, PETEY!
WHERE IS OUR FOE, ROGUE?! I CANNOT SEE THROUGH THE SMOKE!
NIGHTCRAWLER, SELENE IS TRYING TO ESCAPE! INTERCEPT HER!
GOING MY WAY, FRAULEIN?
GUIDE THE OTHERS TO ME, PROFESSOR -- AND QUICKLY -- I CAN'T STAY HERE LONG!
SELENE'S CLEARING A PATH THROUGH THE FLAMES FOR HERSELF AND HER PRISONER; THEY AREN'T AFFECTING HER!
BAMF
HERE WE COME, MY FRIEND!
LOOK OUT, BOY!
YOU'RE HEADIN' FOR A FALL!
AH GOT YOU, COLOSSUS!
NO SENSE RUININ' YOUR PRETTY NEW COSTUME ITS FIRST NIGHT OUT!
SPACEEBA, ROGUE.
IF THAT MEANS "THANKS," HON -- ANYTIME!

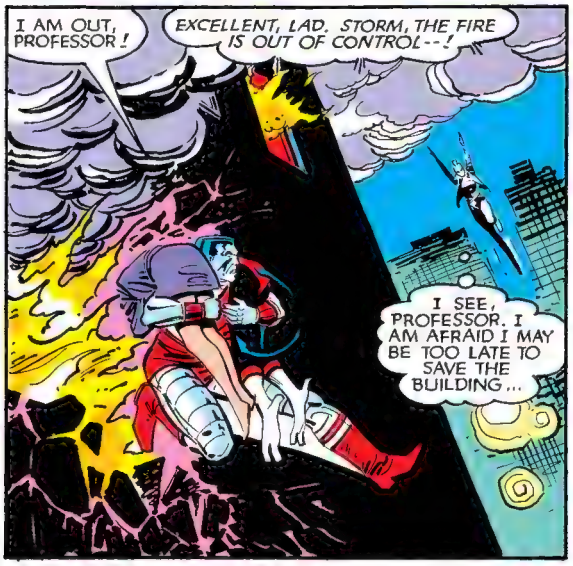

FOOL-- YOU DARE CHALLENGE ONE WHO HAS RULED EMPIRES?!
AS THE SAYING GOES, IT'S A LIVING.
BY THE WAY, *LEIBCHEN*, DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY?
MY COSTUME-- *ZUM TUEFUL*, IT'S CHOKING ME!
I AM DEADLY, TOO, CHANGELING.
RACHEL IS *MINE!* THOUGH YOUR NUMBERS ARE LEGION, YOU'LL NOT KEEP HER FROM ME!
WHY'N'T YOU LET THE GIRL DECIDE THAT FOR HERSELF, OF HER OWN FREE WILL?!
AH GOTTA MAKE THIS SHORT'N'SWEET...
...B'FORE THE ELF AN' RACHEL BOTH GET BARB'CUED.
IMPOSSIBLE! WE'RE TOUCHIN' FLESH-TO-FLESH! AH SHOULD BE ABSORBIN' HER MEM'RIES AN' POWERS--
-- BUT, INSTEAD, THE *REVERSE* IS HAP'NIN'!
SHE'S DRAININ' MY *LIFE!*
STOP!
20

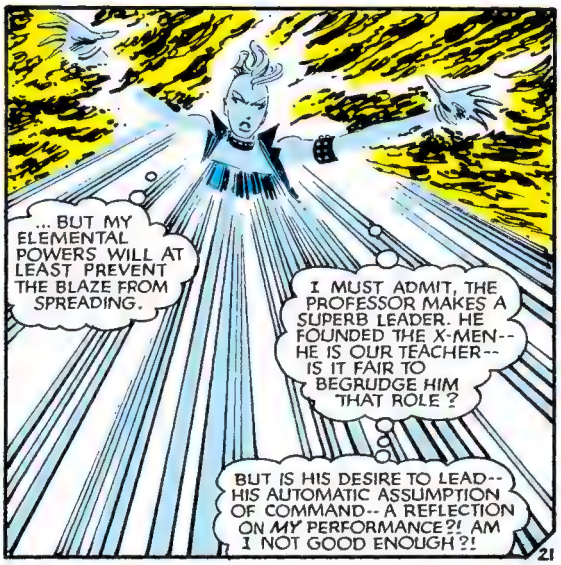

XAVIER'S MENTAL ATTACK--
--MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!
I MUST FLEE!

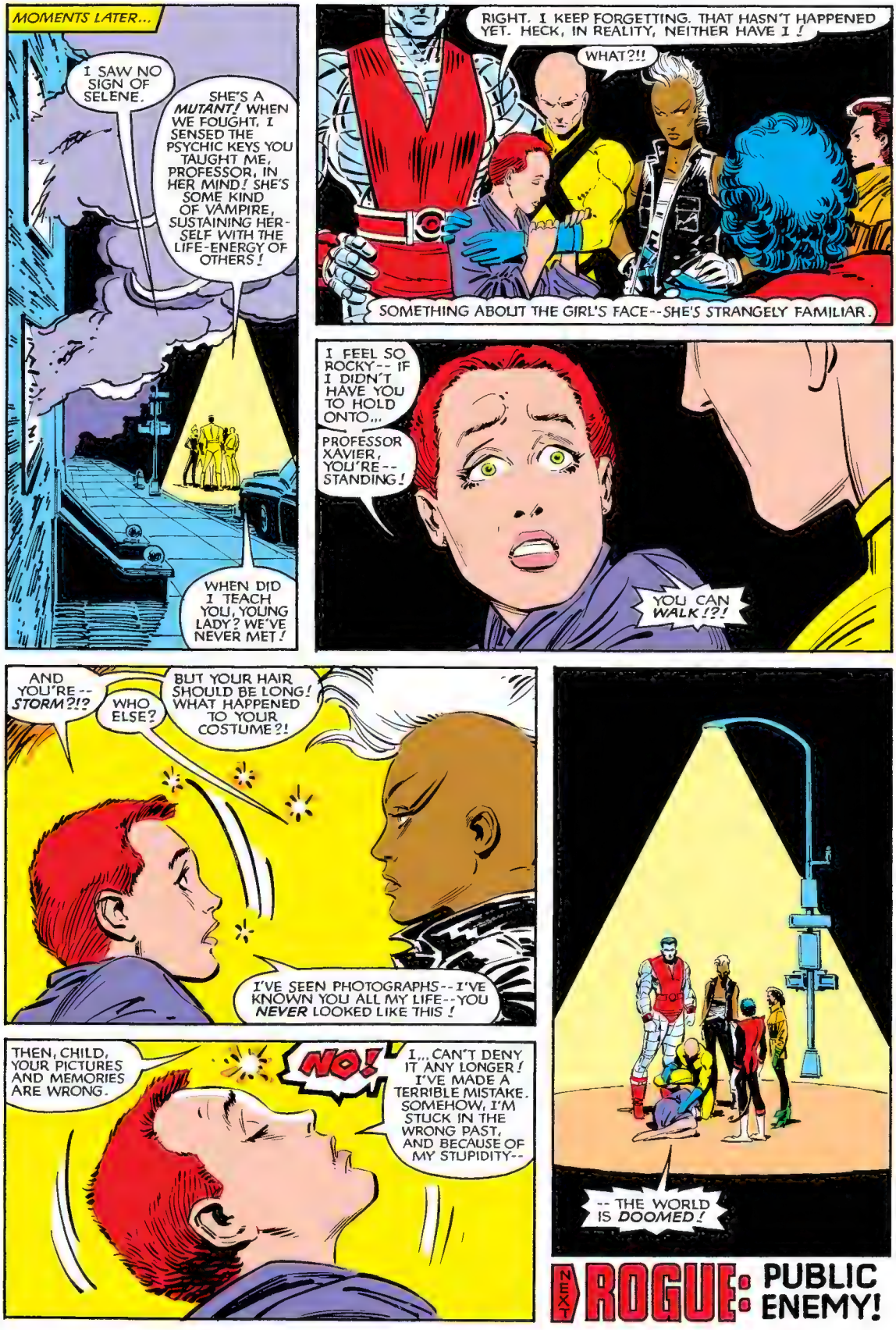

PROFESSOR--SHE'S LEAPING INTO THE HEART OF THE FIRE!
SELENE'S LIKE A CHAMELEON, BLENDING HER PSYCHIC PERSONA WITH THOSE OF THE PEOPLE AROUND HER--I'M LOSING HER IN THE BACKGROUND "STATIC!"
DON'T TRY TO FOLLOW, X-MEN, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!


COLOSSUS, TAKE CARE OF NIGHTCRAWLER AND THE YOUNG LADY.
ROGUE, OPEN A PATHWAY TO THE STREET!

GOOD AS DONE, PROF!
WHEN SELENE ZAPPED ME--IS THAT WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO THOSE AH ATTACK?! IT WAS AWFUL! NO WONDER PEOPLE HATE ME!


I AM OUT, PROFESSOR!
EXCELLENT, LAD. STORM, THE FIRE IS OUT OF CONTROL--!
I SEE, PROFESSOR. I AM AFRAID I MAY BE TOO LATE TO SAVE THE BUILDING...


...BUT MY ELEMENTAL POWERS WILL AT LEAST PREVENT THE BLAZE FROM SPREADING.
I MUST ADMIT, THE PROFESSOR MAKES A SUPERB LEADER. HE FOUNDED THE X-MEN--HE IS OUR TEACHER--IS IT FAIR TO BEGRUDGE HIM THAT ROLE?
BUT IS HIS DESIRE TO LEAD--HIS AUTOMATIC ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND--A REFLECTION ON MY PERFORMANCE?! AM I NOT GOOD ENOUGH?!


MOMENTS LATER...
I SAW NO SIGN OF SELENE.
SHE'S A MUTANT! WHEN WE FOUGHT, I SENSED THE PSYCHIC KEYS YOU TAUGHT ME, PROFESSOR, IN HER MIND! SHE'S SOME KIND OF VAMPIRE, SUSTAINING HERSELF WITH THE LIFE-ENERGY OF OTHERS!
WHEN DID I TEACH YOU, YOUNG LADY? WE'VE NEVER MET!
RIGHT. I KEEP FORGETTING. THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET. HECK, IN REALITY, NEITHER HAVE I!
WHAT?!!
SOMETHING ABOUT THE GIRL'S FACE--SHE'S STRANGELY FAMILIAR.
I FEEL SO ROCKY-- IF I DIDN'T HAVE YOU TO HOLD ONTO...
PROFESSOR XAVIER, YOU'RE-- STANDING!
YOU CAN WALK!?!
AND YOU'RE-- STORM?!?
WHO ELSE?
BUT YOUR HAIR SHOULD BE LONG! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR COSTUME?!
I'VE SEEN PHOTOGRAPHS--I'VE KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE--YOU NEVER LOOKED LIKE THIS!
THEN, CHILD, YOUR PICTURES AND MEMORIES ARE WRONG.
NO!
I,,, CAN'T DENY IT ANY LONGER! I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE. SOMEHOW, I'M STUCK IN THE WRONG PAST, AND BECAUSE OF MY STUPIDITY--
-- THE WORLD IS DOOMED!
NEXT ROGUE: PUBLIC ENEMY!

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
ROGUE: PUBLIC ENEMY!
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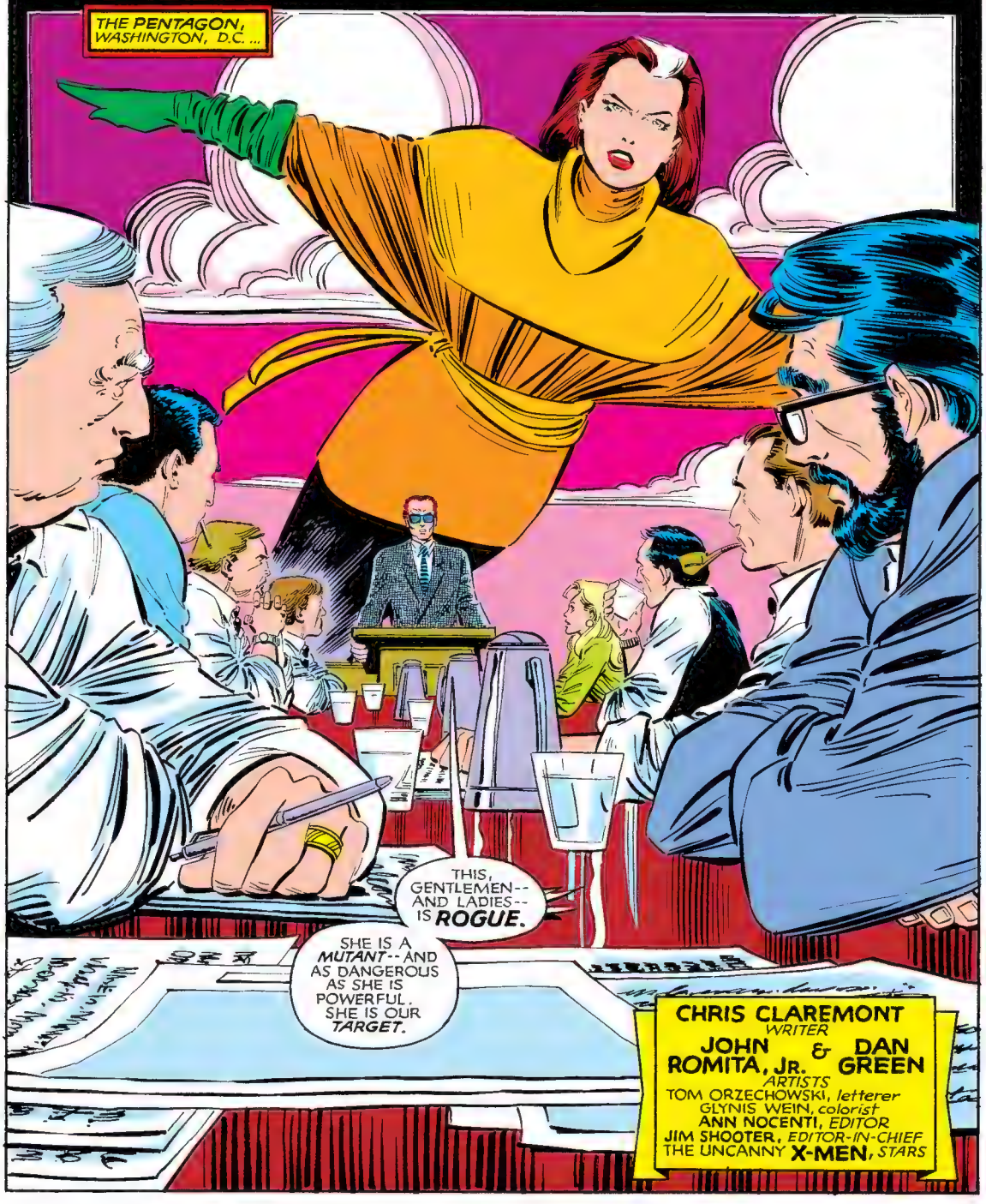
STAN LEE PRESENTS

PUBLIC ENEMY!


THE PENTAGON, WASHINGTON, D.C. ...
THIS, GENTLEMEN-- AND LADIES-- IS ROGUE.
SHE IS A MUTANT-- AND AS DANGEROUS AS SHE IS POWERFUL, SHE IS OUR TARGET.

CHRIS CLAREMONT
WRITER

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GLYNIS WEIN, colorist
ANN NOCENTI, EDITOR
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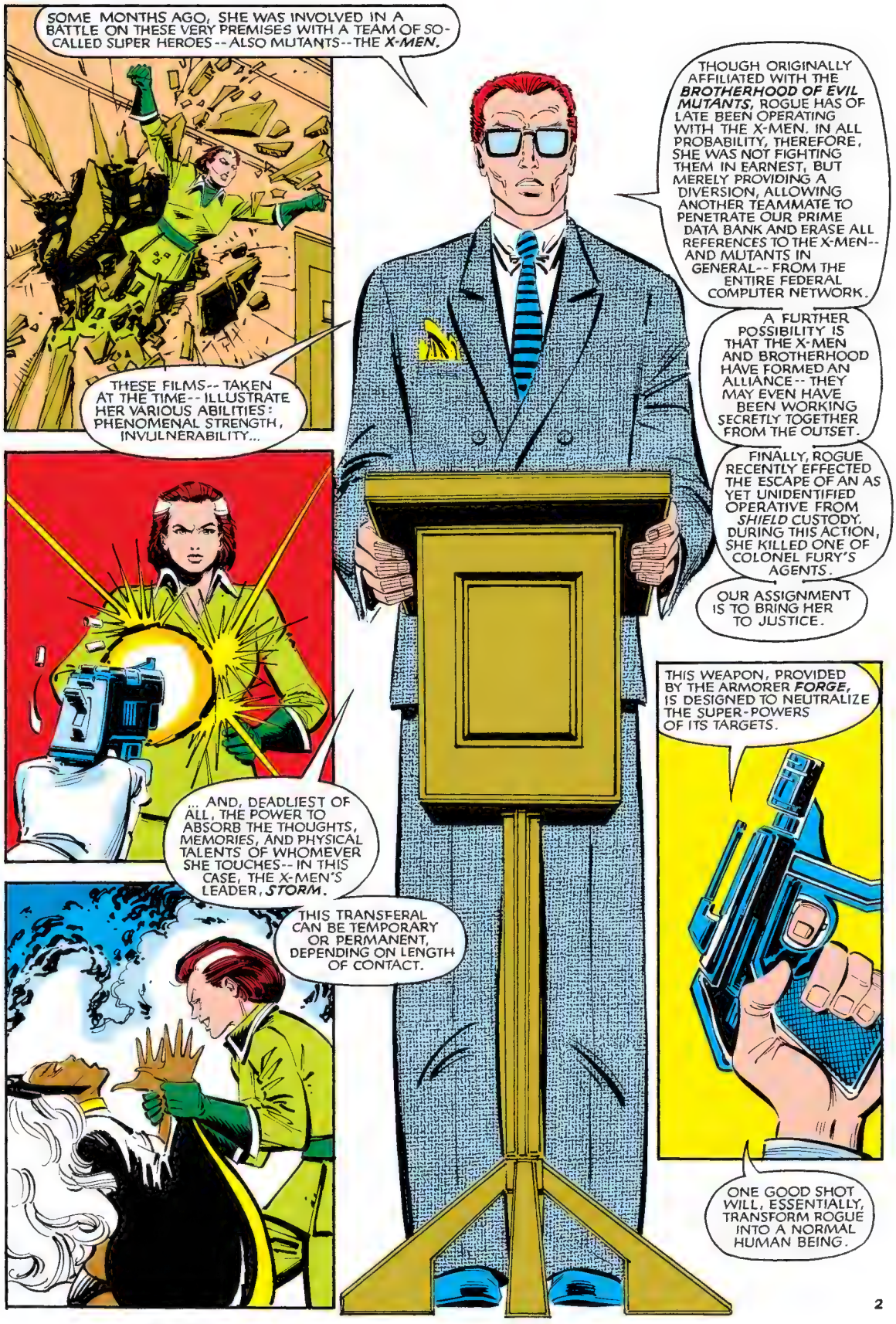
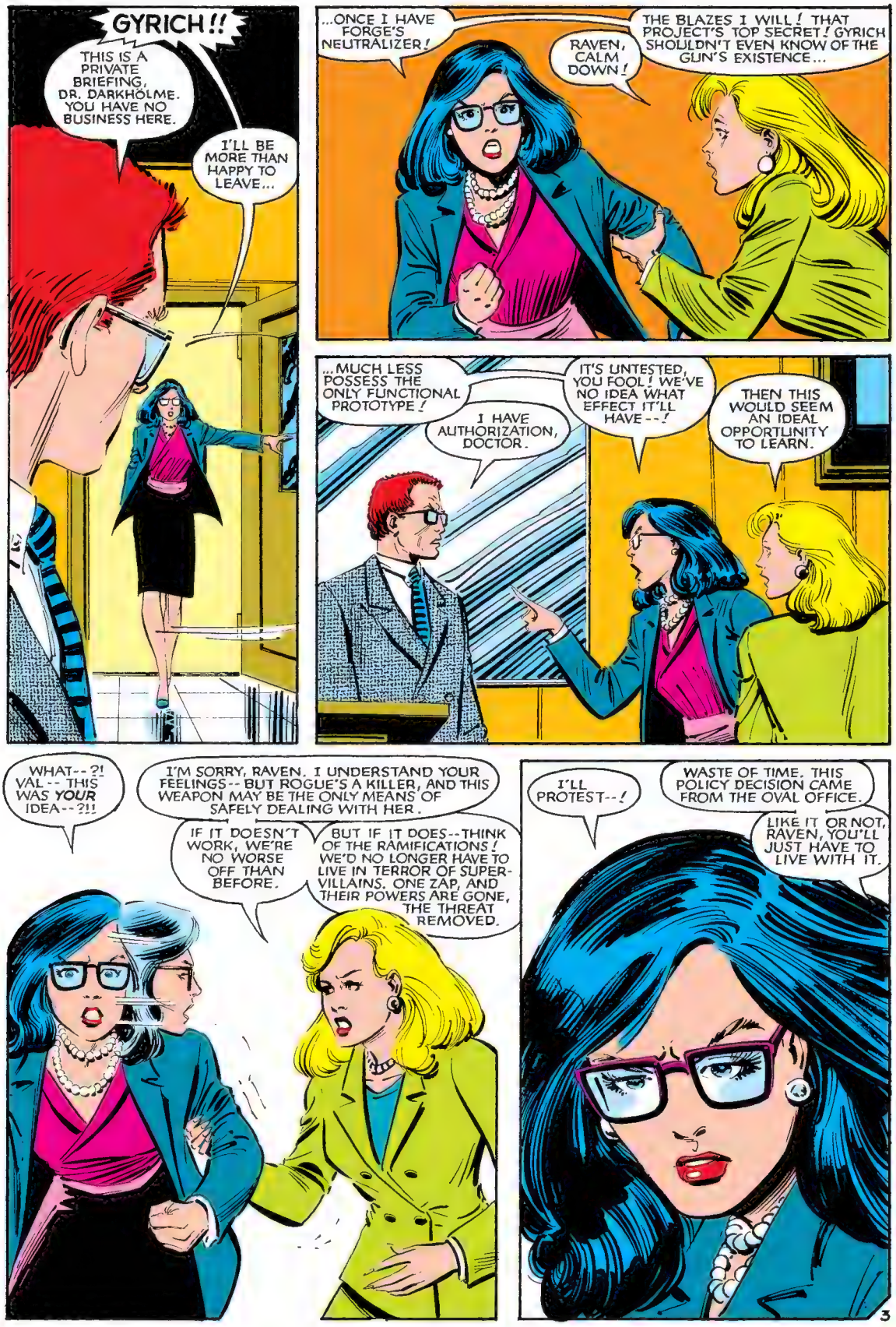
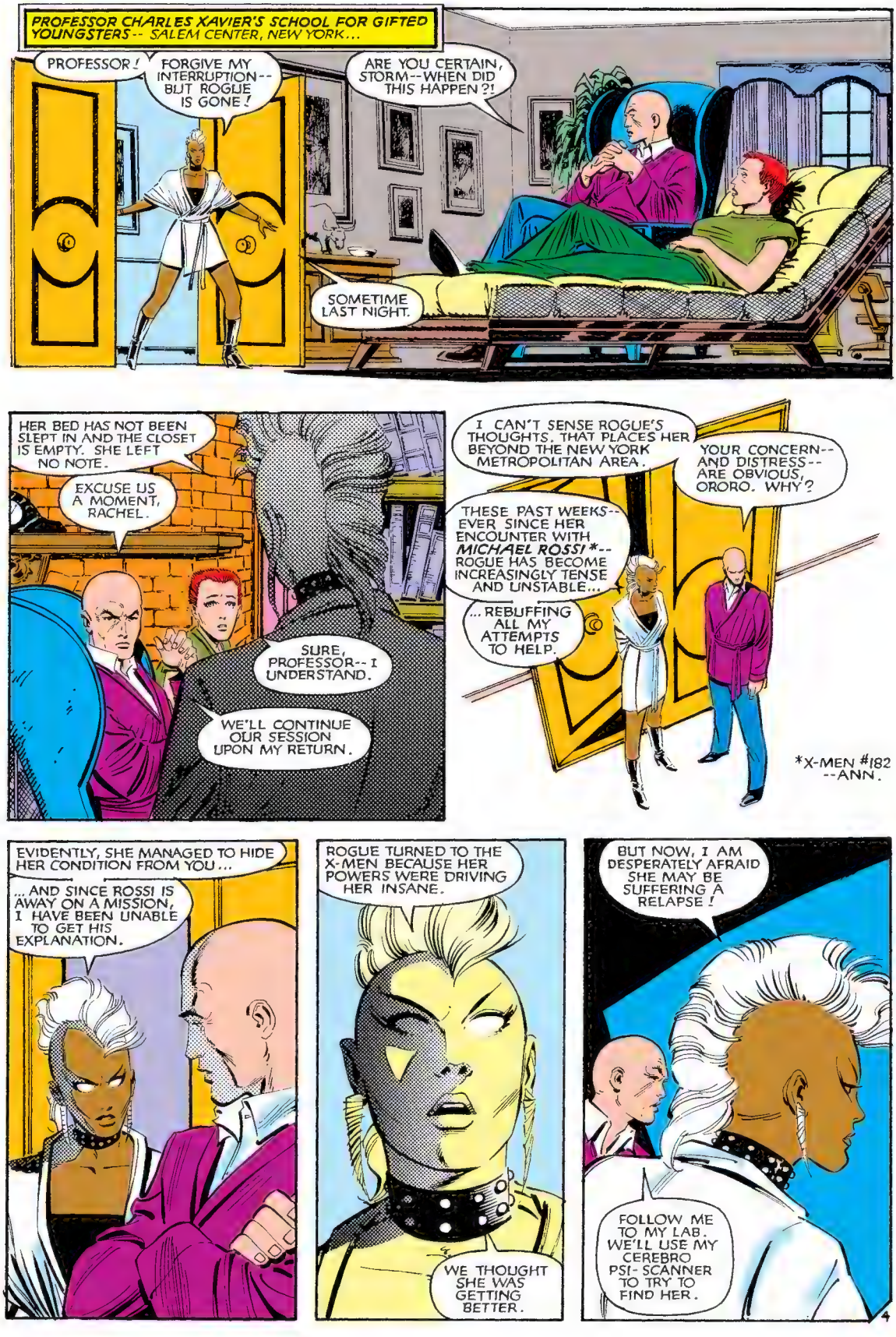
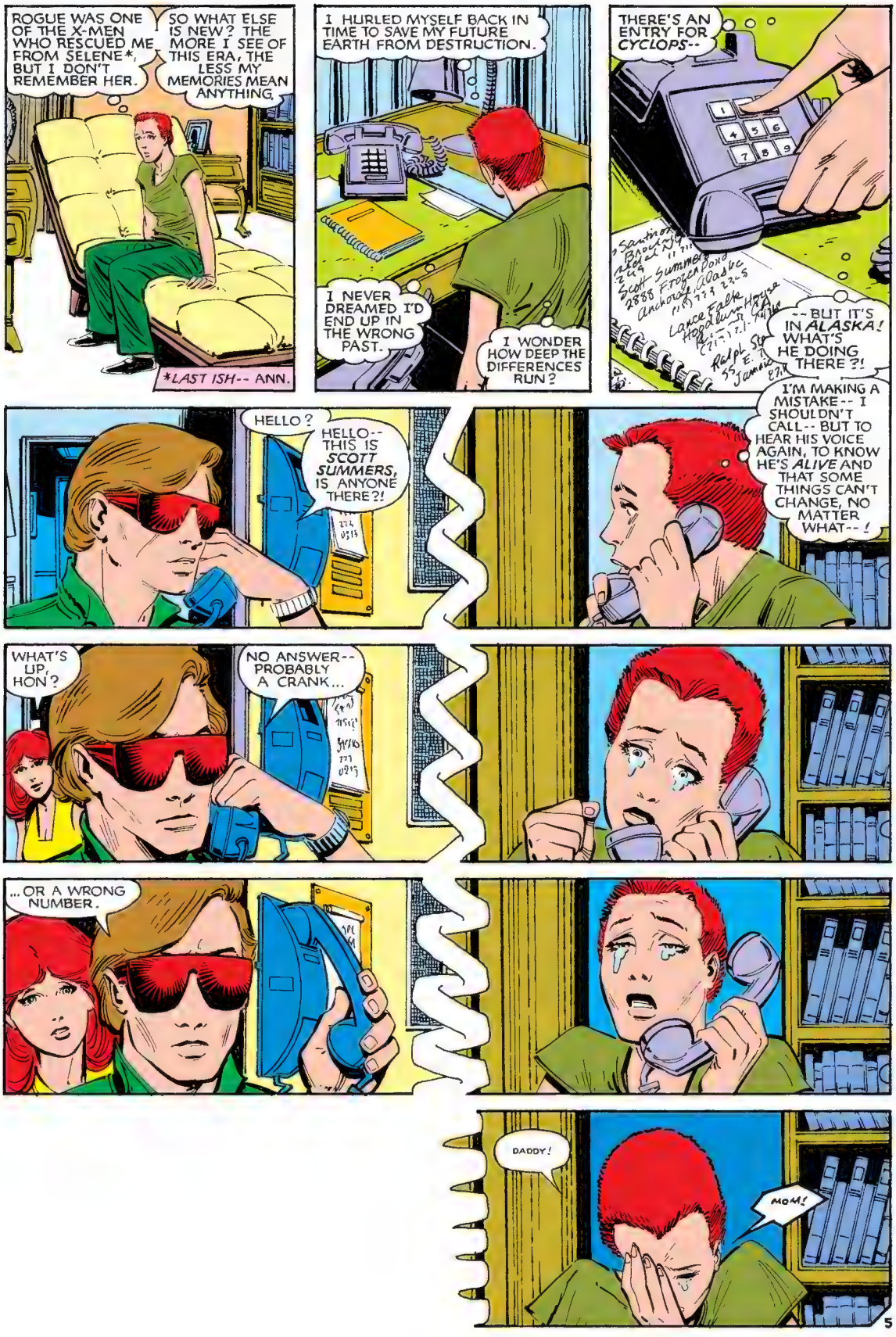
THE UNCANNY X-MEN, STARS

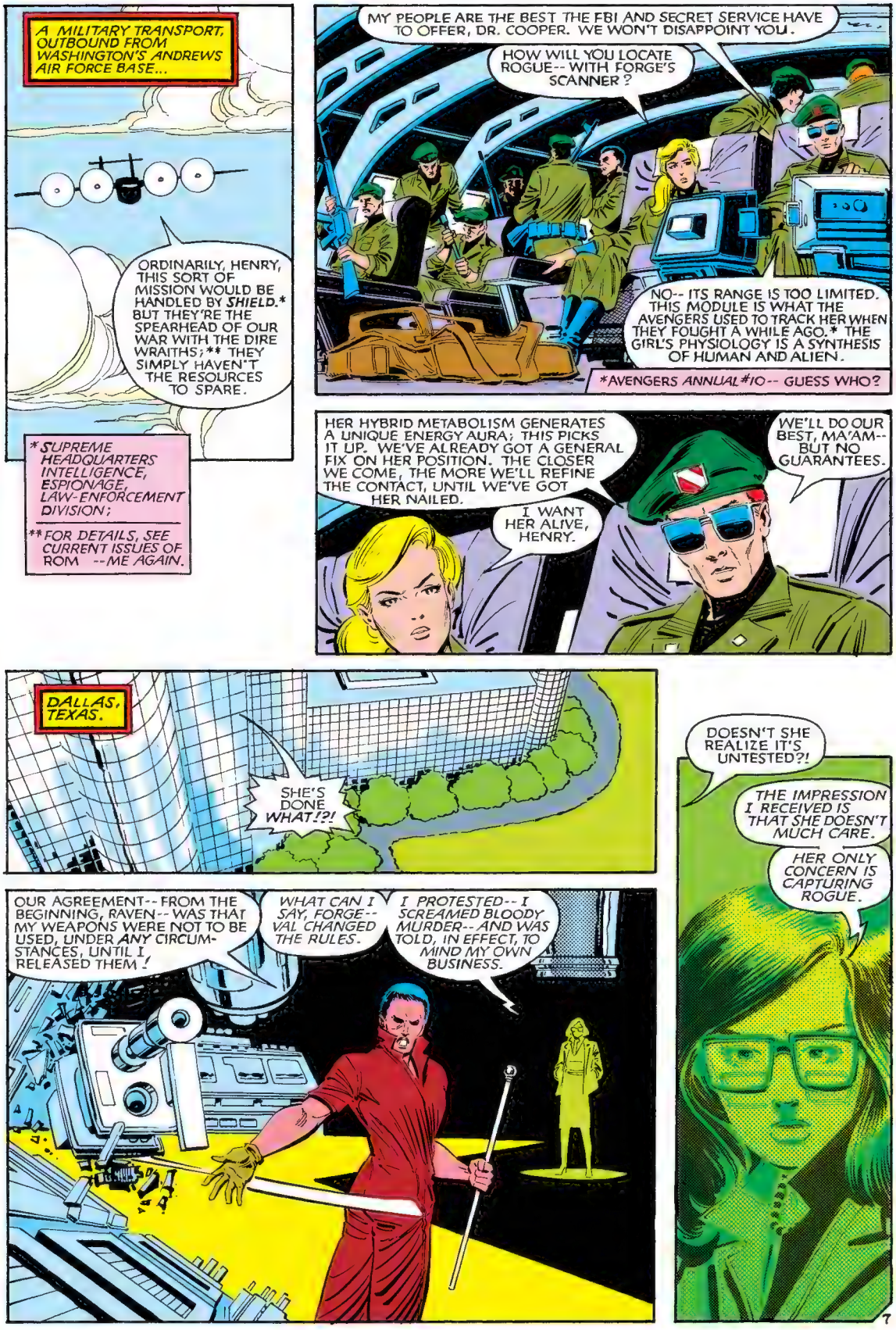

SOME MONTHS AGO, SHE WAS INVOLVED IN A BATTLE ON THESE VERY PREMISES WITH A TEAM OF SO-CALLED SUPER HEROES--ALSO MUTANTS--THE X-MEN.
THESE FILMS--TAKEN AT THE TIME--ILLUSTRATE HER VARIOUS ABILITIES: PHENOMENAL STRENGTH, INVULNERABILITY...
... AND, DEADLIEST OF ALL, THE POWER TO ABSORB THE THOUGHTS, MEMORIES, AND PHYSICAL TALENTS OF WHOMEVER SHE TOUCHES--IN THIS CASE, THE X-MEN'S LEADER, STORM.
THIS TRANSFERAL CAN BE TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT, DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF CONTACT.
THOUGH ORIGINALLY AFFILIATED WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS, ROGUE HAS OF LATE BEEN OPERATING WITH THE X-MEN. IN ALL PROBABILITY, THEREFORE, SHE WAS NOT FIGHTING THEM IN EARNEST, BUT MERELY PROVIDING A DIVERSION, ALLOWING ANOTHER TEAMMATE TO PENETRATE OUR PRIME DATA BANK AND ERASE ALL REFERENCES TO THE X-MEN--AND MUTANTS IN GENERAL--FROM THE ENTIRE FEDERAL COMPUTER NETWORK.
A FURTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE X-MEN AND BROTHERHOOD HAVE FORMED AN ALLIANCE--THEY MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN WORKING SECRETLY TOGETHER FROM THE OUTSET.
FINALLY, ROGUE RECENTLY EFFECTED THE ESCAPE OF AN AS YET UNIDENTIFIED OPERATIVE FROM SHIELD CUSTODY. DURING THIS ACTION, SHE KILLED ONE OF COLONEL FURY'S AGENTS.
OUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO BRING HER TO JUSTICE.
THIS WEAPON, PROVIDED BY THE ARMORER FORGE, IS DESIGNED TO NEUTRALIZE THE SUPER-POWERS OF ITS TARGETS.
ONE GOOD SHOT WILL, ESSENTIALLY, TRANSFORM ROGUE INTO A NORMAL HUMAN BEING.

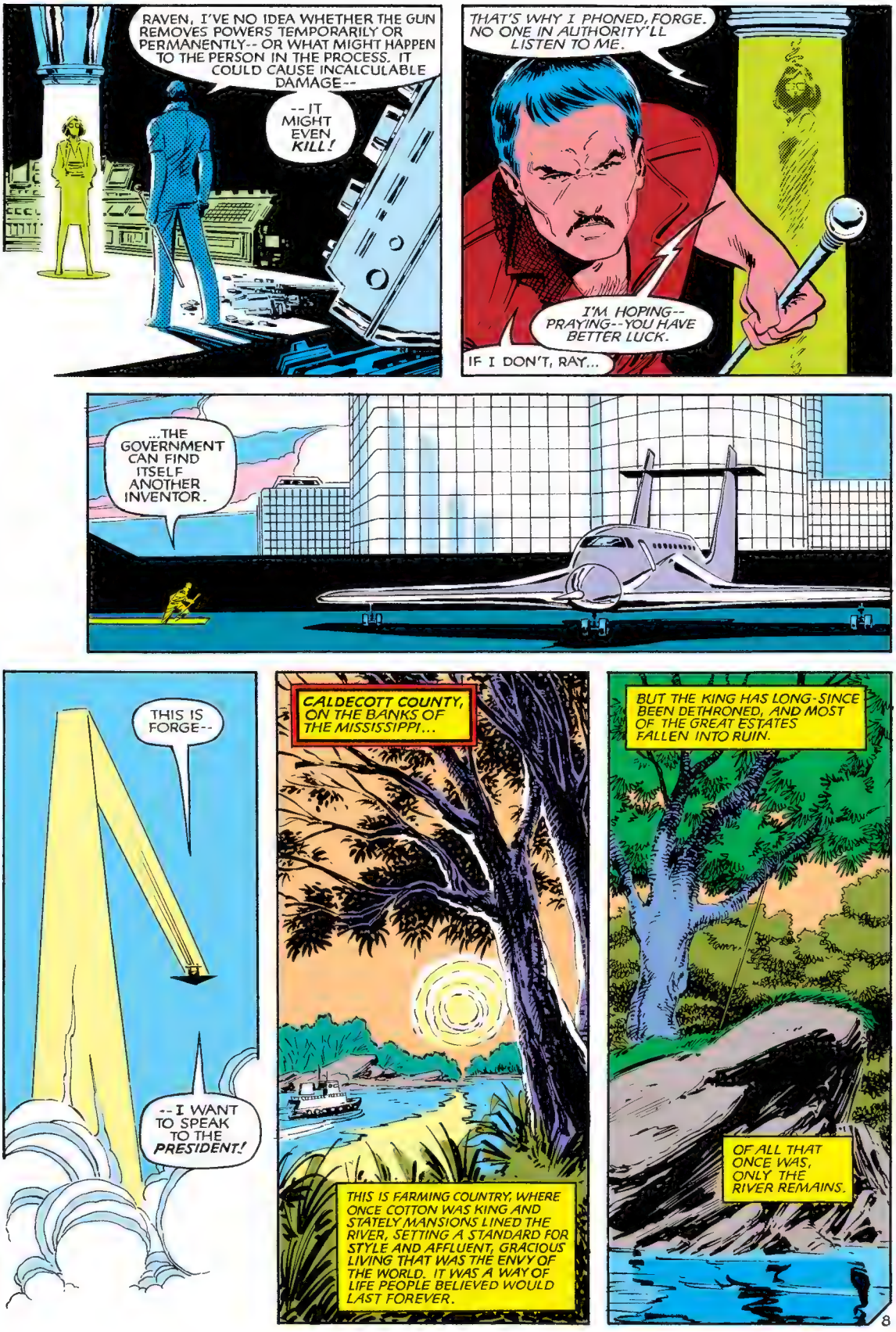

GYRICH!!
THIS IS A PRIVATE BRIEFING, DR. DARKHOLME. YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS HERE.
I'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO LEAVE...
...ONCE I HAVE FORGE'S NEUTRALIZER!
RAVEN, CALM DOWN!
THE BLAZES I WILL! THAT PROJECT'S TOP SECRET! GYRICH SHOULDN'T EVEN KNOW OF THE GUN'S EXISTENCE...
...MUCH LESS POSSESS THE ONLY FUNCTIONAL PROTOTYPE!
I HAVE AUTHORIZATION, DOCTOR.
IT'S UNTESTED, YOU FOOL! WE'VE NO IDEA WHAT EFFECT IT'LL HAVE--!
THEN THIS WOULD SEEM AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN.
WHAT--?! VAL-- THIS WAS YOUR IDEA--?!!
I'M SORRY, RAVEN. I UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS-- BUT ROGUE'S A KILLER, AND THIS WEAPON MAY BE THE ONLY MEANS OF SAFELY DEALING WITH HER.
IF IT DOESN'T WORK, WE'RE NO WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE.
BUT IF IT DOES--THINK OF THE RAMIFICATIONS! WE'D NO LONGER HAVE TO LIVE IN TERROR OF SUPER-VILLAINS. ONE ZAP, AND THEIR POWERS ARE GONE, THE THREAT REMOVED.
I'LL PROTEST--!
WASTE OF TIME. THIS POLICY DECISION CAME FROM THE OVAL OFFICE.
LIKE IT OR NOT, RAVEN, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO LIVE WITH IT.

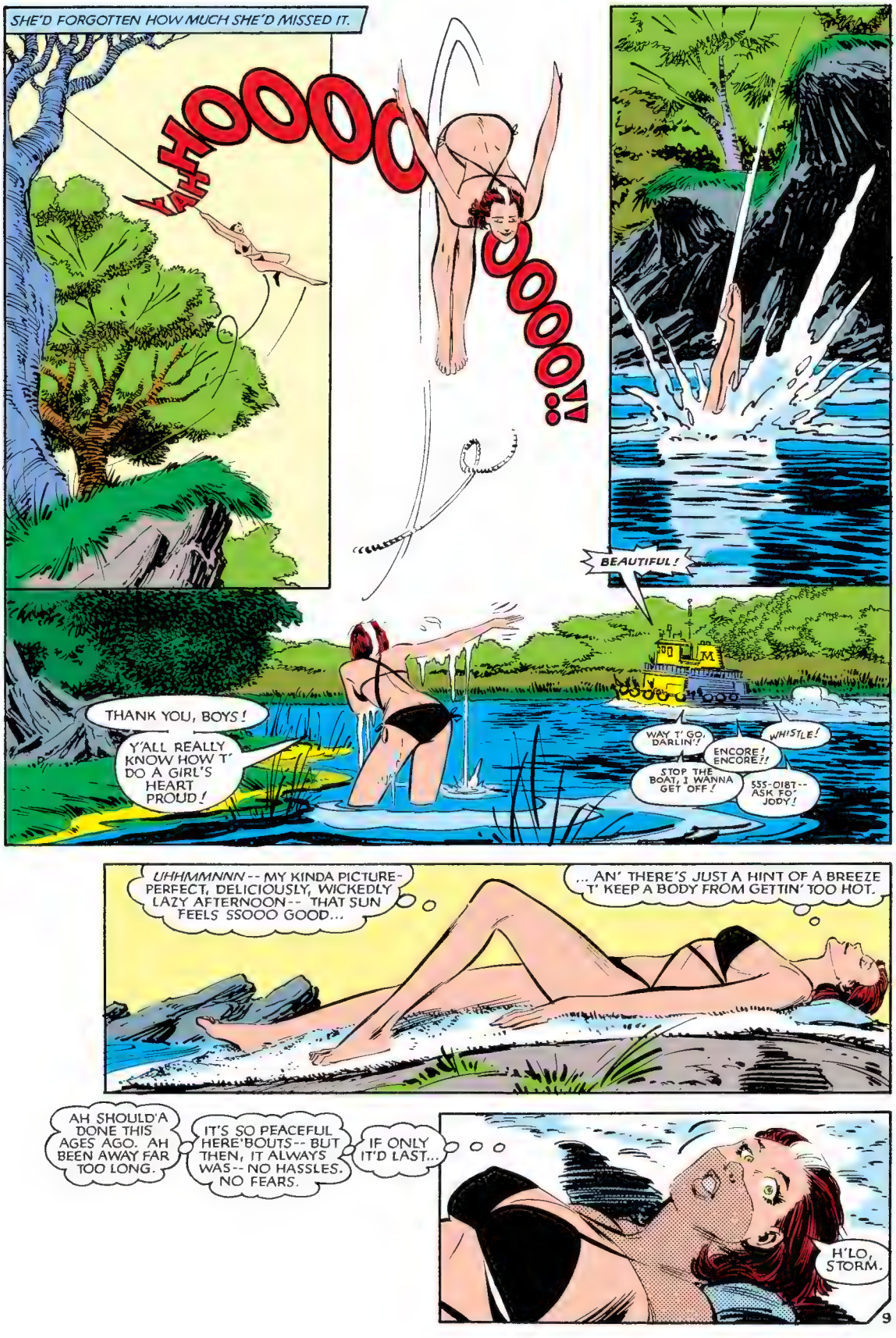

PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS-- SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK...
PROFESSOR!
FORGIVE MY INTERRUPTION-- BUT ROGUE IS GONE!
ARE YOU CERTAIN, STORM--WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?!
SOMETIME LAST NIGHT.
HER BED HAS NOT BEEN SLEPT IN AND THE CLOSET IS EMPTY. SHE LEFT NO NOTE.
EXCUSE US A MOMENT, RACHEL.
SURE, PROFESSOR-- I UNDERSTAND.
WE'LL CONTINUE OUR SESSION UPON MY RETURN.
I CAN'T SENSE ROGUE'S THOUGHTS. THAT PLACES HER BEYOND THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA.
YOUR CONCERN-- AND DISTRESS-- ARE OBVIOUS, ORORO. WHY?
THESE PAST WEEKS-- EVER SINCE HER ENCOUNTER WITH MICHAEL ROSSI*-- ROGUE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY TENSE AND UNSTABLE...
...REBUFFING ALL MY ATTEMPTS TO HELP.
*X-MEN #182 --ANN.
EVIDENTLY, SHE MANAGED TO HIDE HER CONDITION FROM YOU...
...AND SINCE ROSSI IS AWAY ON A MISSION, I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET HIS EXPLANATION.
ROGUE TURNED TO THE X-MEN BECAUSE HER POWERS WERE DRIVING HER INSANE.
WE THOUGHT SHE WAS GETTING BETTER.
BUT NOW, I AM DESPERATELY AFRAID SHE MAY BE SUFFERING A RELAPSE!
FOLLOW ME TO MY LAB. WE'LL USE MY CEREBRO PSI-SCANNER TO TRY TO FIND HER.
4

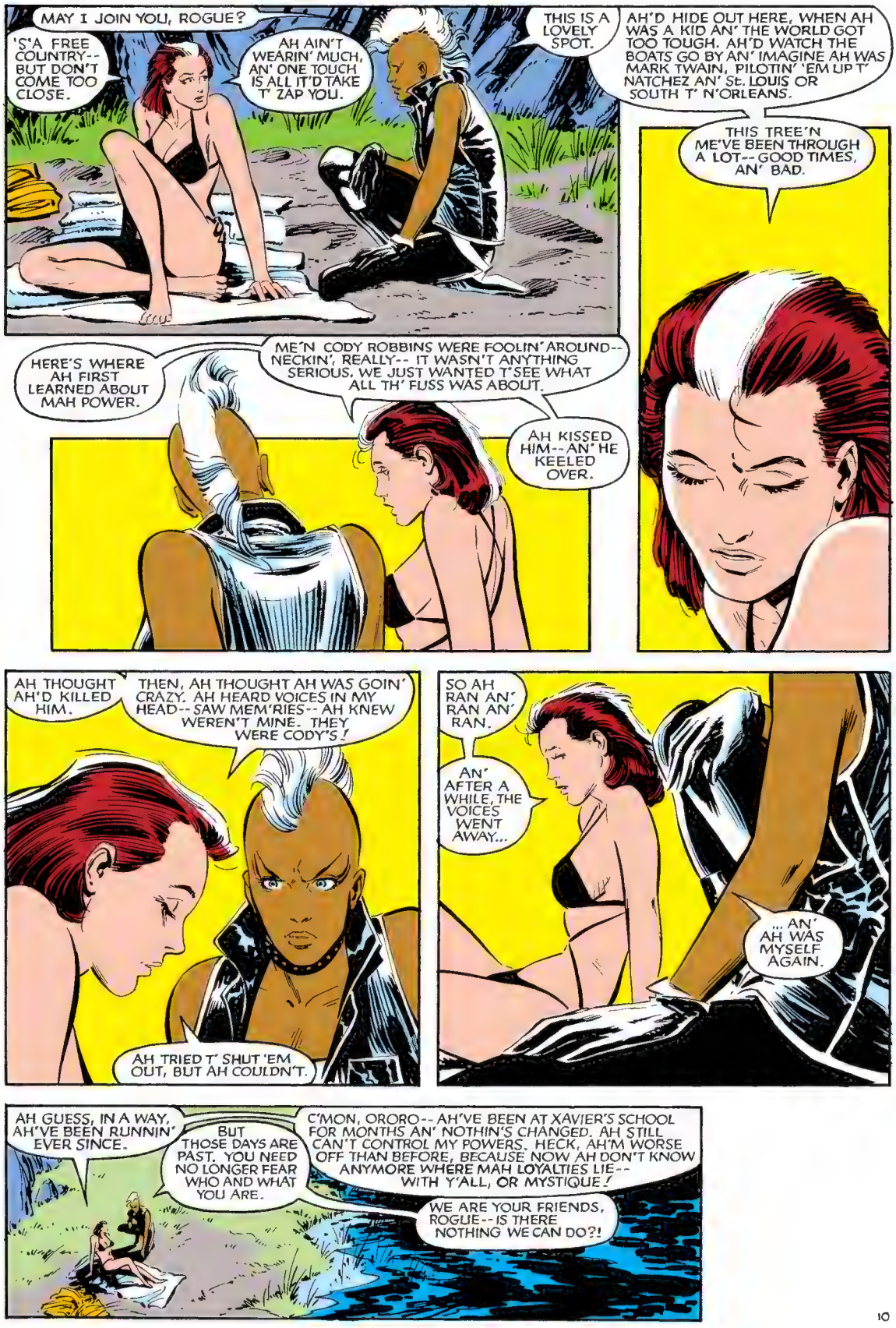

ROGUE WAS ONE OF THE X-MEN WHO RESCUED ME FROM SELENE*, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER HER.
SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW? THE MORE I SEE OF THIS ERA, THE LESS MY MEMORIES MEAN ANYTHING.
*LAST ISH-- ANN.
I HURLED MYSELF BACK IN TIME TO SAVE MY FUTURE EARTH FROM DESTRUCTION.
I NEVER DREAMED I'D END UP IN THE WRONG PAST.
I WONDER HOW DEEP THE DIFFERENCES RUN?
THERE'S AN ENTRY FOR CYCLOPS--
--BUT IT'S IN ALASKA! WHAT'S HE DOING THERE?!
HELLO?
HELLO-- THIS IS SCOTT SUMMERS, IS ANYONE THERE?!
I'M MAKING A MISTAKE-- I SHOULDN'T CALL-- BUT TO HEAR HIS VOICE AGAIN, TO KNOW HE'S ALIVE AND THAT SOME THINGS CAN'T CHANGE, NO MATTER WHAT--!
WHAT'S UP, HON?
NO ANSWER-- PROBABLY A CRANK...
...OR A WRONG NUMBER.
DADDY!
MOM!

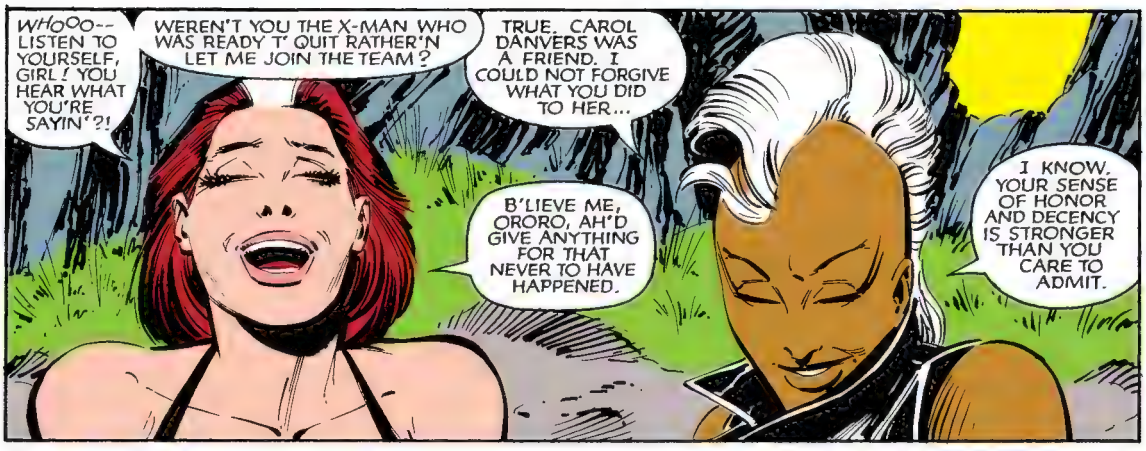
THE PENTAGON.
ACCESS TO THIS SUB-LEVEL OF THE SPRAWLING COMPLEX IS RESTRICTED BY RAVEN DARKHOLME TO A VERY SELECT FEW.
NONE WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THEIR LOYALTY IS TO HER.
THEY COMPRISE THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS, AND RAVEN -- IN HER GUISE AS THE SHAPE-CHANGER, MYSTIQUE -- IS THEIR LEADER.
THESE SECRET, HIDDEN CHAMBERS ARE THE GROUP'S OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS.
IRENË!
I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU, BUT I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE. IT HAS BEEN A BRUTAL DAY.
ROGUE IS IN GRAVE DANGER.
I KNOW.
VAL COOPER AND HENRY GYRICH WANT TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF HER, TO PROVE THE GOVERNMENT CAN HANDLE SUPER-CRIMINALS WITHOUT THE AID OF HEROES LIKE THE AVENGERS. FORGE'S NEUTRALIZER MAY GIVE THEM THE MEANS TO DO IT.
WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS, RAVEN?
I'M REALLY NOT SURE.
ROGUE'S POWERS ARE THE CAUSE OF ALL HER MISERY; MIGHT SHE NOT BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM? SHE COULD LIVE A NORMAL LIFE. SHE'D HAVE HER CHANCE AT HAPPINESS.
AND, OF COURSE, BE FREE TO RETURN HOME TO YOU.
IS THAT SO BAD? I LOVE HER AS MY OWN DAUGHTER, IRENE. HER PLACE IS WITH ME. THIS IS MY OPPORTUNITY TO HELP IN A WAY XAVIER CAN'T.
HAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO MAKE SUCH A DECISION WITHOUT ROGUE'S KNOWLEDGE OR CONSENT? SHE IS A GROWN WOMAN, RAVEN, WELL ABLE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER OWN LIFE. THIS CHOICE MUST BE HERS.
YOU'RE THE PRECOG, DESTINY -- YOU CAN "SEE" THE FUTURE --
-- TELL ME WHICH COURSE OF ACTION IS BEST FOR ROGUE.
I WISH I COULD. BUT THESE PAST FEW DAYS, MY PERCEPTIONS HAVE BECOME JUMBLED --
-- AS IF THE VERY FABRIC OF TIME ITSELF HAS BEEN RENT ASUNDER.
I AM SORRY, RAVEN. THE ONLY ADVICE I CAN OFFER...
... IS THAT YOU FOLLOW THE DICTATES OF YOUR HEART.


A MILITARY TRANSPORT, OUTBOUND FROM WASHINGTON'S ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE...
ORDINARILY, HENRY, THIS SORT OF MISSION WOULD BE HANDLED BY SHIELD.* BUT THEY'RE THE SPEARHEAD OF OUR WAR WITH THE DIRE WRAITHS;** THEY SIMPLY HAVEN'T THE RESOURCES TO SPARE.
* SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTELLIGENCE, ESPIONAGE, LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION;
** FOR DETAILS, SEE CURRENT ISSUES OF ROM --ME AGAIN.
MY PEOPLE ARE THE BEST THE FBI AND SECRET SERVICE HAVE TO OFFER, DR. COOPER. WE WON'T DISAPPOINT YOU.
HOW WILL YOU LOCATE ROGUE-- WITH FORGE'S SCANNER?
NO-- ITS RANGE IS TOO LIMITED. THIS MODULE IS WHAT THE AVENGERS USED TO TRACK HER WHEN THEY FOUGHT A WHILE AGO.* THE GIRL'S PHYSIOLOGY IS A SYNTHESIS OF HUMAN AND ALIEN.
*AVENGERS ANNUAL #10-- GUESS WHO?
HER HYBRID METABOLISM GENERATES A UNIQUE ENERGY AURA; THIS PICKS IT UP. WE'VE ALREADY GOT A GENERAL FIX ON HER POSITION. THE CLOSER WE COME, THE MORE WE'LL REFINE THE CONTACT, UNTIL WE'VE GOT HER NAILED.
I WANT HER ALIVE, HENRY.
WE'LL DO OUR BEST, MA'AM-- BUT NO GUARANTEES.
DALLAS, TEXAS.
SHE'S DONE WHAT!?!
OUR AGREEMENT-- FROM THE BEGINNING, RAVEN-- WAS THAT MY WEAPONS WERE NOT TO BE USED, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, UNTIL I RELEASED THEM!
WHAT CAN I SAY, FORGE-- VAL CHANGED THE RULES.
I PROTESTED-- I SCREAMED BLOODY MURDER-- AND WAS TOLD, IN EFFECT, TO MIND MY OWN BUSINESS.
DOESN'T SHE REALIZE IT'S UNTESTED?!
THE IMPRESSION I RECEIVED IS THAT SHE DOESN'T MUCH CARE.
HER ONLY CONCERN IS CAPTURING ROGUE.

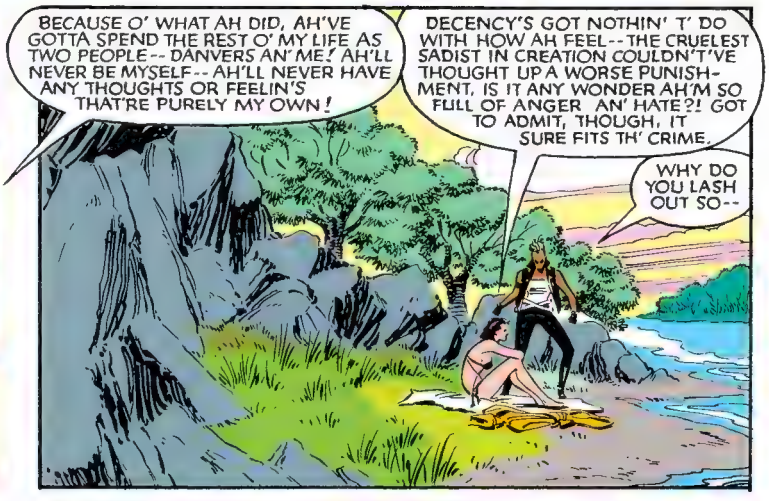

RAVEN, I'VE NO IDEA WHETHER THE GUN REMOVES POWERS TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY-- OR WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THE PERSON IN THE PROCESS. IT COULD CAUSE INCALCULABLE DAMAGE--
--IT MIGHT EVEN KILL!
THAT'S WHY I PHONED, FORGE. NO ONE IN AUTHORITY'LL LISTEN TO ME.
I'M HOPING-- PRAYING--YOU HAVE BETTER LUCK.
IF I DON'T, RAY...
...THE GOVERNMENT CAN FIND ITSELF ANOTHER INVENTOR.
THIS IS FORGE--
--I WANT TO SPEAK TO THE PRESIDENT!
CALDECOTT COUNTY, ON THE BANKS OF THE MISSISSIPPI...
THIS IS FARMING COUNTRY; WHERE ONCE COTTON WAS KING AND STATELY MANSIONS LINED THE RIVER, SETTING A STANDARD FOR STYLE AND AFFLUENT, GRACIOUS LIVING THAT WAS THE ENVY OF THE WORLD. IT WAS A WAY OF LIFE PEOPLE BELIEVED WOULD LAST FOREVER.
BUT THE KING HAS LONG-SINCE BEEN DETHRONED, AND MOST OF THE GREAT ESTATES FALLEN INTO RUIN.
OF ALL THAT ONCE WAS, ONLY THE RIVER REMAINS.

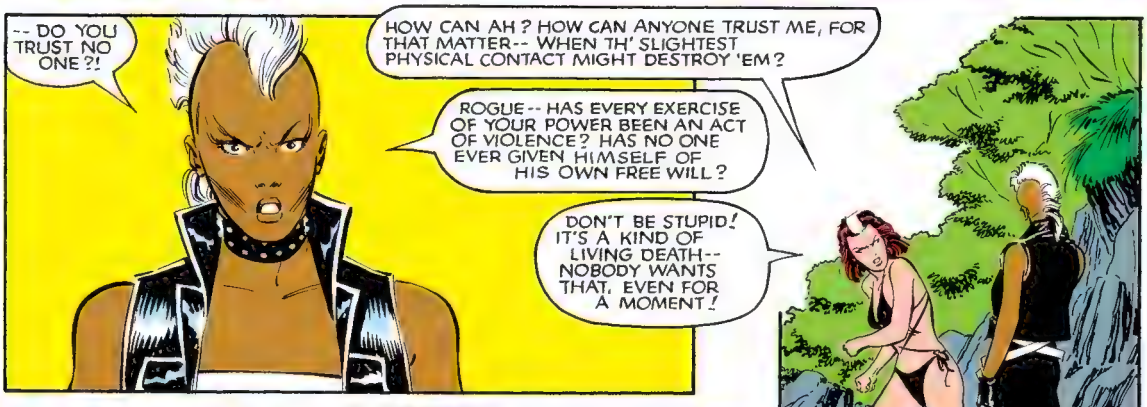

SHE'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH SHE'D MISSED IT.
YAHOOOOOOOOO!
BEAUTIFUL!
THANK YOU, BOYS!
Y'ALL REALLY KNOW HOW T' DO A GIRL'S HEART PROUD!
WAY T' GO, DARLIN'!
WHISTLE!
ENCORE! ENCORE!!
STOP THE BOAT, I WANNA GET OFF!
535-0187-- ASK FO' JODY!
UHHMMNNN-- MY KINDA PICTURE-PERFECT, DELICIOUSLY, WICKEDLY LAZY AFTERNOON-- THAT SUN FEELS SSOOO GOOD...
... AN' THERE'S JUST A HINT OF A BREEZE T' KEEP A BODY FROM GETTIN' TOO HOT.
AH SHOULD'A DONE THIS AGES AGO. AH BEEN AWAY FAR TOO LONG.
IT'S SO PEACEFUL HERE'BOUTS-- BUT THEN, IT ALWAYS WAS-- NO HASSLES. NO FEARS.
IF ONLY IT'D LAST...
H'LO, STORM.

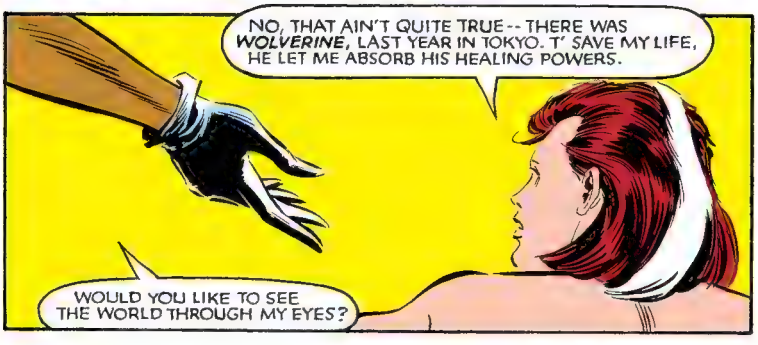

MAY I JOIN YOU, ROGUE?
'S'A FREE COUNTRY-- BUT DON'T COME TOO CLOSE.
AH AIN'T WEARIN' MUCH, AN' ONE TOUCH IS ALL IT'D TAKE T' ZAP YOU.
THIS IS A LOVELY SPOT.
AH'D HIDE OUT HERE, WHEN AH WAS A KID AN' THE WORLD GOT TOO TOUGH. AH'D WATCH THE BOATS GO BY AN' IMAGINE AH WAS MARK TWAIN, PILOTIN' 'EM UP T' NATCHEZ AN' St. LOUIS OR SOUTH T' N'ORLEANS.
THIS TREE'N ME'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT-- GOOD TIMES, AN' BAD.
HERE'S WHERE AH FIRST LEARNED ABOUT MAH POWER.
ME'N CODY ROBBINS WERE FOOLIN' AROUND-- NECKIN', REALLY-- IT WASN'T ANYTHING SERIOUS. WE JUST WANTED T'SEE WHAT ALL TH' FUSS WAS ABOUT.
AH KISSED HIM-- AN' HE KEELED OVER.
AH THOUGHT AH'D KILLED HIM.
THEN, AH THOUGHT AH WAS GOIN' CRAZY. AH HEARD VOICES IN MY HEAD-- SAW MEM'RIES-- AH KNEW WEREN'T MINE. THEY WERE CODY'S!
AH TRIED T' SHUT 'EM OUT, BUT AH COULDN'T.
SO AH RAN AN' RAN AN' RAN.
AN' AFTER A WHILE, THE VOICES WENT AWAY...
... AN' AH WAS MYSELF AGAIN.
AH GUESS, IN A WAY, AH'VE BEEN RUNNIN' EVER SINCE.
BUT THOSE DAYS ARE PAST. YOU NEED NO LONGER FEAR WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE.
C'MON, ORORO-- AH'VE BEEN AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR MONTHS AN' NOTHIN'S CHANGED. AH STILL CAN'T CONTROL MY POWERS. HECK, AH'M WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE, BECAUSE NOW AH DON'T KNOW ANYMORE WHERE MAH LOYALTIES LIE-- WITH Y'ALL, OR MYSTIQUE!
WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS, ROGUE-- IS THERE NOTHING WE CAN DO?!


WHOOO-- LISTEN TO YOURSELF, GIRL! YOU HEAR WHAT YOU'RE SAYIN'?!
WEREN'T YOU THE X-MAN WHO WAS READY T' QUIT RATHER'N LET ME JOIN THE TEAM?
TRUE. CAROL DANVERS WAS A FRIEND. I COULD NOT FORGIVE WHAT YOU DID TO HER...
B'LIEVE ME, ORORO, AH'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR THAT NEVER TO HAVE HAPPENED.
I KNOW. YOUR SENSE OF HONOR AND DECENCY IS STRONGER THAN YOU CARE TO ADMIT.

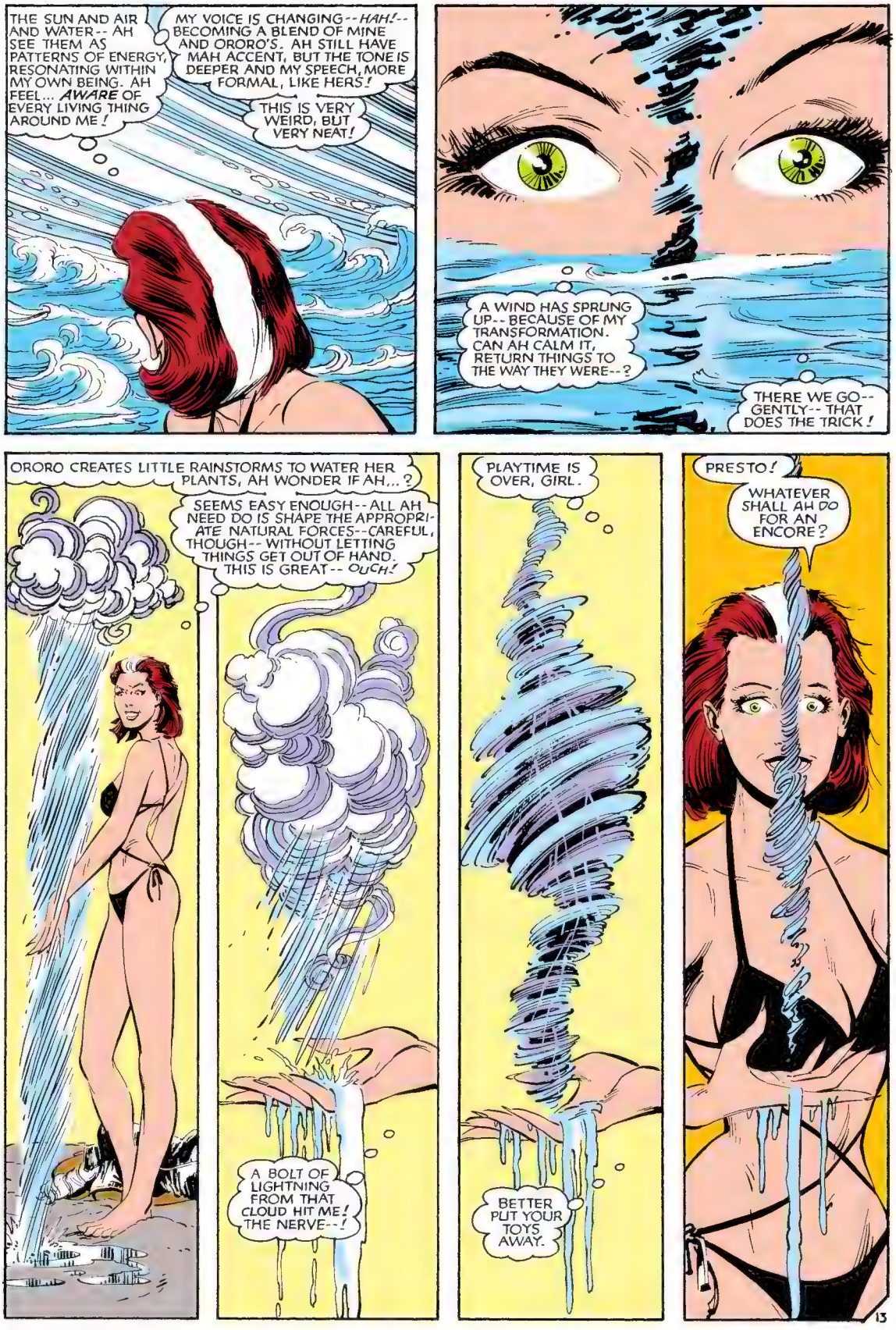
GIMME A BREAK, WILLYA?

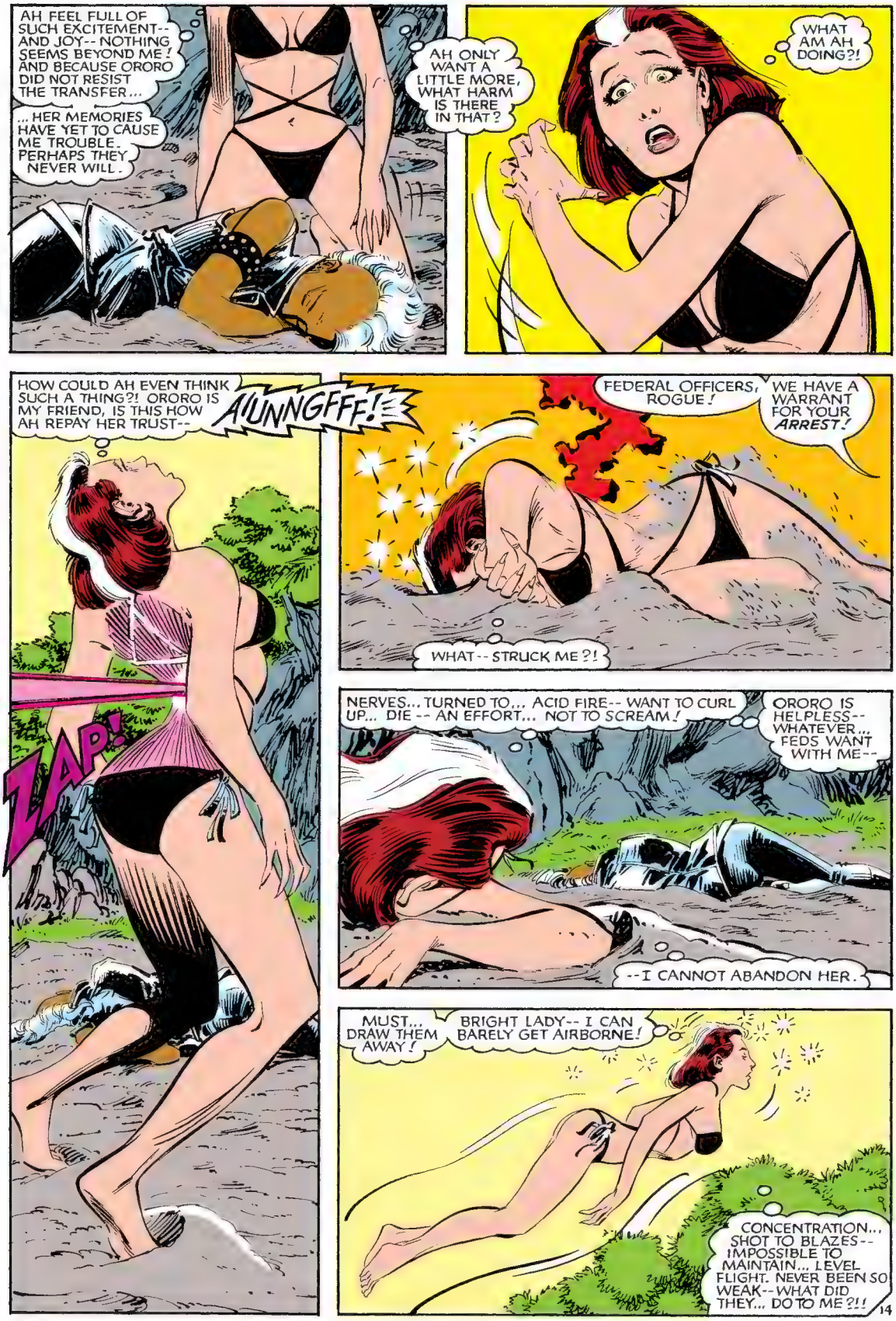

BECAUSE O' WHAT AH DID, AH'VE GOTTA SPEND THE REST O' MY LIFE AS TWO PEOPLE-- DANVERS AN' ME! AH'LL NEVER BE MYSELF-- AH'LL NEVER HAVE ANY THOUGHTS OR FEELIN'S THAT'RE PURELY MY OWN!
DECENCY'S GOT NOTHIN' T' DO WITH HOW AH FEEL-- THE CRUELEST SADIST IN CREATION COULDN'T'VE THOUGHT UP A WORSE PUNISHMENT. IS IT ANY WONDER AH'M SO FULL OF ANGER AN' HATE?! GOT TO ADMIT, THOUGH, IT SURE FITS TH' CRIME.
WHY DO YOU LASH OUT SO--

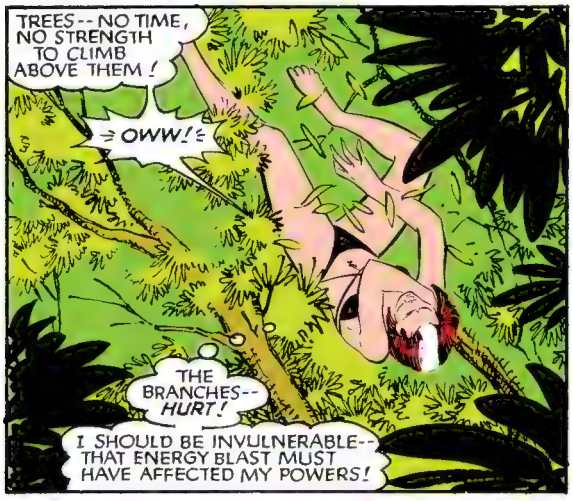

-- DO YOU TRUST NO ONE?!
HOW CAN AH? HOW CAN ANYONE TRUST ME, FOR THAT MATTER-- WHEN TH' SLIGHTEST PHYSICAL CONTACT MIGHT DESTROY 'EM?
ROGUE-- HAS EVERY EXERCISE OF YOUR POWER BEEN AN ACT OF VIOLENCE? HAS NO ONE EVER GIVEN HIMSELF OF HIS OWN FREE WILL?
DON'T BE STUPID! IT'S A KIND OF LIVING DEATH-- NOBODY WANTS THAT, EVEN FOR A MOMENT!

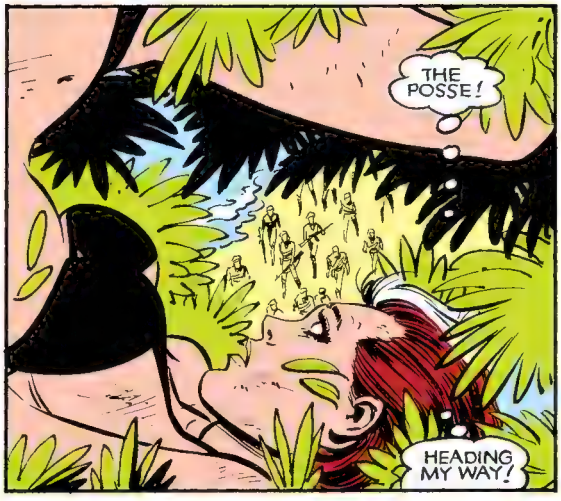

NO, THAT AIN'T QUITE TRUE-- THERE WAS WOLVERINE, LAST YEAR IN TOKYO. T' SAVE MY LIFE, HE LET ME ABSORB HIS HEALING POWERS.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH MY EYES?

NO!
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME, AT THE PENTAGON?! AH NEARLY TORE THE PLACE APART!
I WAS FIGHTING YOU THEN WITH EVERY OUNCE OF MY BEING. TODAY, I GIVE OF MYSELF FREELY, WITHOUT RESERVATION.
SUPPOSE SOMETHIN' GOES WRONG -- SUPPOSE AH DO T' YOU WHAT AH DID T' CAROL DANVERS -- AN' STEAL YOUR POWERS, YOUR MEM'RIES, YOUR SELF -- FOREVER!
I AM PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK.
AH'M AFRAID!
YOU THINK I AM NOT?
ORORO!
GODDESS!
I NEVER IMAGINED THE WORLD COULD BE SO -- BEAUTIFUL!

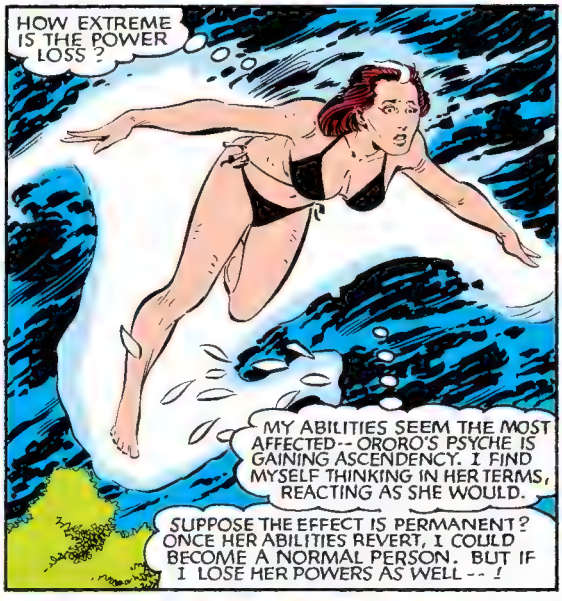

THE SUN AND AIR AND WATER-- AH SEE THEM AS PATTERNS OF ENERGY, RESONATING WITHIN MY OWN BEING. AH FEEL... AWARE OF EVERY LIVING THING AROUND ME!
MY VOICE IS CHANGING--HAH!-- BECOMING A BLEND OF MINE AND ORORO'S. AH STILL HAVE MAH ACCENT, BUT THE TONE IS DEEPER AND MY SPEECH, MORE FORMAL, LIKE HERS!
THIS IS VERY WEIRD, BUT VERY NEAT!
A WIND HAS SPRUNG UP-- BECAUSE OF MY TRANSFORMATION. CAN AH CALM IT, RETURN THINGS TO THE WAY THEY WERE--?
THERE WE GO-- GENTLY-- THAT DOES THE TRICK!
ORORO CREATES LITTLE RAINSTORMS TO WATER HER PLANTS, AH WONDER IF AH...?
SEEMS EASY ENOUGH--ALL AH NEED DO IS SHAPE THE APPROPRIATE NATURAL FORCES--CAREFUL, THOUGH-- WITHOUT LETTING THINGS GET OUT OF HAND. THIS IS GREAT-- OUCH!
A BOLT OF LIGHTNING FROM THAT CLOUD HIT ME! THE NERVE--!
PLAYTIME IS OVER, GIRL.
BETTER PUT YOUR TOYS AWAY.
PRESTO!
WHATEVER SHALL AH DO FOR AN ENCORE?

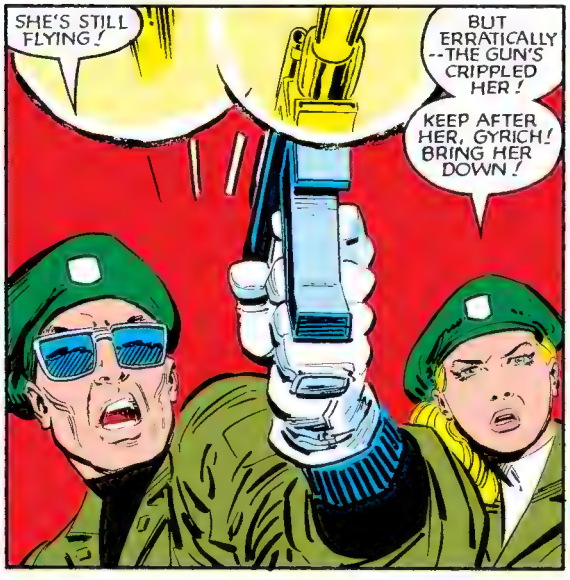

AH FEEL FULL OF SUCH EXCITEMENT-- AND JOY-- NOTHING SEEMS BEYOND ME! AND BECAUSE ORORO DID NOT RESIST THE TRANSFER...
... HER MEMORIES HAVE YET TO CAUSE ME TROUBLE.. PERHAPS THEY NEVER WILL.
AH ONLY WANT A LITTLE MORE, WHAT HARM IS THERE IN THAT?
WHAT AM AH DOING?!
HOW COULD AH EVEN THINK SUCH A THING?! ORORO IS MY FRIEND, IS THIS HOW AH REPAY HER TRUST--
AIUNNGFFF!
ZAP!
FEDERAL OFFICERS, ROGUE!
WE HAVE A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST!
WHAT-- STRUCK ME?!
NERVES... TURNED TO... ACID FIRE-- WANT TO CURL UP... DIE -- AN EFFORT... NOT TO SCREAM!
ORORO IS HELPLESS-- WHATEVER... FEDS WANT WITH ME--
--I CANNOT ABANDON HER.
MUST... DRAW THEM AWAY!
BRIGHT LADY-- I CAN BARELY GET AIRBORNE!
CONCENTRATION... SHOT TO BLAZES-- IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN... LEVEL FLIGHT. NEVER BEEN SO WEAK--WHAT DID THEY... DO TO ME?!!


TREES--NO TIME, NO STRENGTH TO CLIMB ABOVE THEM!
OWW!
THE BRANCHES--HURT!
I SHOULD BE INVULNERABLE--THAT ENERGY BLAST MUST HAVE AFFECTED MY POWERS!

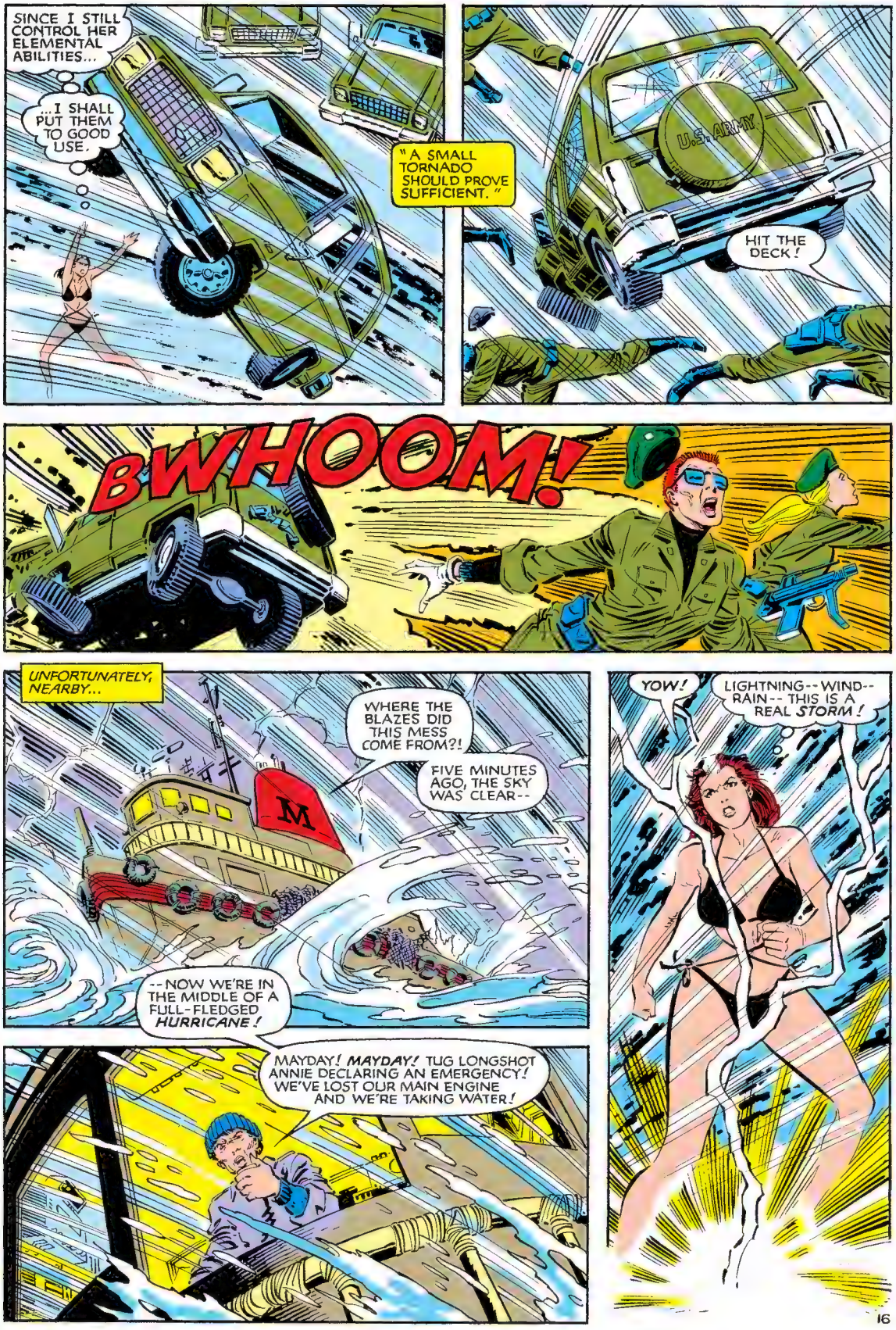

THE POSSE!
HEADING MY WAY!

CRUNCH!
I HEARD A CRY--LOOK OUT!
THERE SHE GOES!

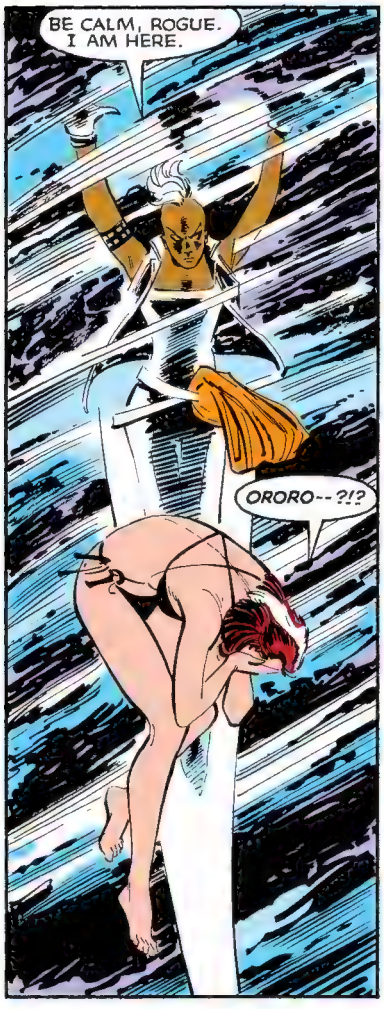

HOW EXTREME IS THE POWER LOSS?
MY ABILITIES SEEM THE MOST AFFECTED--ORORO'S PSYCHE IS GAINING ASCENDENCY. I FIND MYSELF THINKING IN HER TERMS, REACTING AS SHE WOULD.
SUPPOSE THE EFFECT IS PERMANENT? ONCE HER ABILITIES REVERT, I COULD BECOME A NORMAL PERSON. BUT IF I LOSE HER POWERS AS WELL--!


SHE'S STILL FLYING!
BUT ERRATICALLY--THE GUN'S CRIPPLED HER!
KEEP AFTER HER, GYRICH! BRING HER DOWN!

I NEED ALL MY SPEED AND AGILITY!
FOR ORORO'S SAKE, I DARE NOT AFFORD ANOTHER HIT!


SINCE I STILL CONTROL HER ELEMENTAL ABILITIES...
...I SHALL PUT THEM TO GOOD USE.
"A SMALL TORNADO SHOULD PROVE SUFFICIENT."
U.S. ARMY
HIT THE DECK!
BWHOOM!
UNFORTUNATELY, NEARBY...
WHERE THE BLAZES DID THIS MESS COME FROM?!
FIVE MINUTES AGO, THE SKY WAS CLEAR--
--NOW WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A FULL-FLEDGED HURRICANE!
MAYDAY! MAYDAY! TUG LONGSHOT ANNIE DECLARING AN EMERGENCY! WE'VE LOST OUR MAIN ENGINE AND WE'RE TAKING WATER!
YOW!
LIGHTNING--WIND--RAIN--THIS IS A REAL STORM!

AM I THE CAUSE?! IS THIS A REFLECTION OF MY RAGE WITH THE FEDS?!!
MY LORD-- NO WONDER ORORO HAS BEEN GOING SQUIRRELLY, IF THIS IS WHAT SHE HAS TO LIVE WITH...
...HER EVERY EMOTION ECHOED BY THE WEATHER AROUND HER.
FOR ALL AH CARE, THE FEDS CAN DROWN-- SERVE THEM RIGHT.
THAT SIREN-- THE TUG AH SAW EARLIER--
-- SHE MUST BE IN TROUBLE!
THOSE GUYS AREN'T PART O' THIS-- THEY'RE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS-- AH CAN'T ALLOW 'EM TO COME TO ANY HARM.
NOW, IF THAT REACTION WASN'T PURE ORORO, AH DUNNO WHAT IS.
WHATEVER WILL PEOPLE THINK?! AH'M S'POSED T' BE AS CRUEL AN' NASTY AS THEY COME.
DEARIE ME, LAND SAKES ALIVE-- THIS WILL RUIN MY REPUTATION!
QUIT CLOWNIN', GIRL. REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID BEFORE-- SEE THE GALE AS PATTERNS OF FORCE--
--AH... AH CAN'T!
MY MIND'S A BLANK! ORORO'S SPECIAL PERCEPTIONS ARE GONE!
AH'M TRYIN' T' MAKE TH' ELEMENTS OBEY MY WILL--
-- BUT NOTHING'S HAPPENING!!

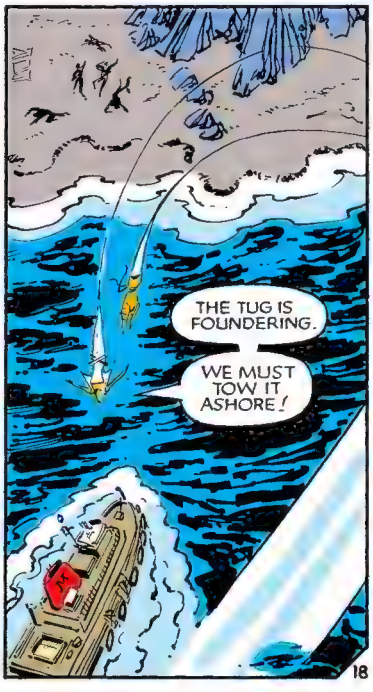

BE CALM, ROGUE. I AM HERE.
ORORO--?!?

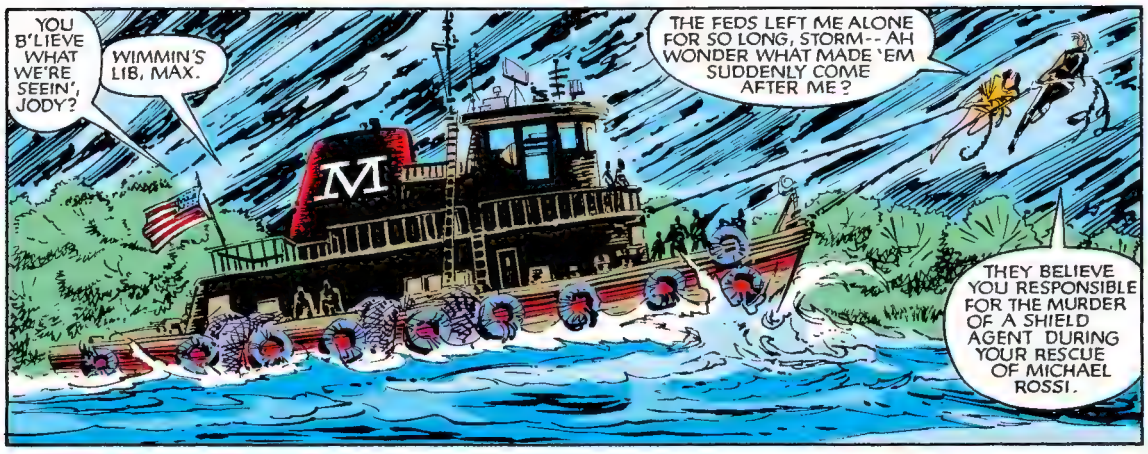
THERE-- THE STORM IS DISPERSING.
HOW LONG'VE YOU BEEN OKAY?

MY AWARENESS BEGAN TO RETURN WHEN YOU WERE LAST ON THE BEACH-- I FELT THE LIGHTNING STRIKE.
THAT MEANS THE THOUGHTS AH HAD-- ABOUT THE TUG'S CREW-- WEREN'T HERS AT ALL, BUT MY OWN!
AIN'T THAT A CROCK-- MY REP REALLY IS SHOT!

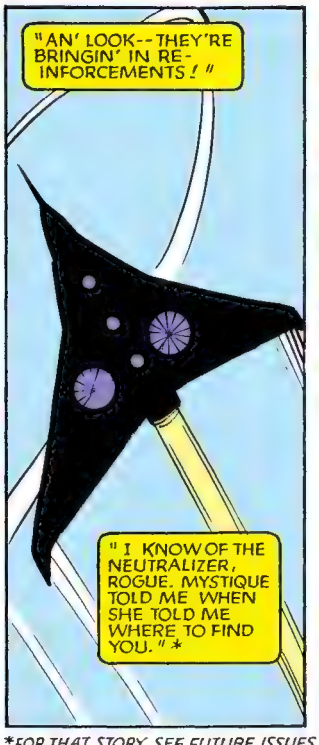
I BROUGHT YOUR TUNIC.
THANKS!
YOU LOOK-- STRANGELY HAPPY...

JUST COMIN' T' TERMS WITH MYSELF-- CONCEDIN' YOU MAY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT-- PERHAPS AH'M NOT AS ROTTEN AS AH LIKED T' THINK.
THERE IS HOPE FOR EVERYONE, CHILD.
IF YOU SAY SO. WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

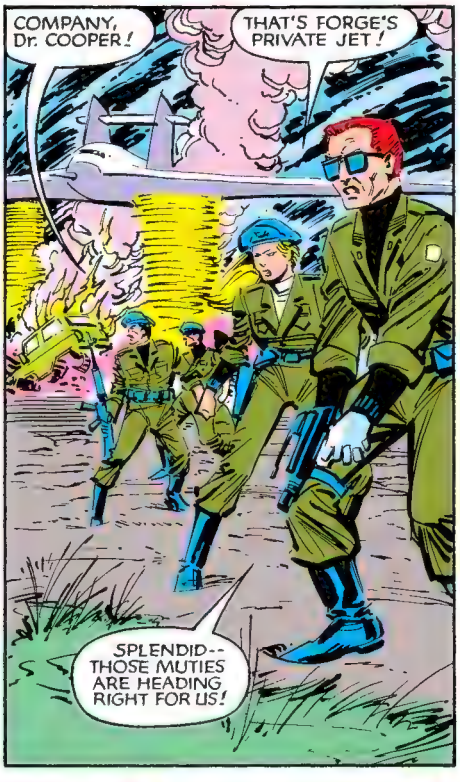

THE TUG IS FOUNDERING.
WE MUST TOW IT ASHORE!


YOU B'LIEVE WHAT WE'RE SEEIN', JODY?
WIMMIN'S LIB, MAX.
THE FEDS LEFT ME ALONE FOR SO LONG, STORM--AH WONDER WHAT MADE 'EM SUDDENLY COME AFTER ME?
THEY BELIEVE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF A SHIELD AGENT DURING YOUR RESCUE OF MICHAEL ROSSI.

THAT'S CRAZY! AH DIDN'T KILL ANYONE. THERE WAS A DEAD GUY IN ROSSI'S CELL, BUT HE'D BEEN WHACKED BY HIS PARTNER--ORORO, AH'M BEIN' FRAMED!
WE BETTER MAKE TRACKS, WHILE WE HAVE THE CHANCE.
THEY'VE GOT A WEAPON THAT CANCELS OUT SUPERPOWERS!

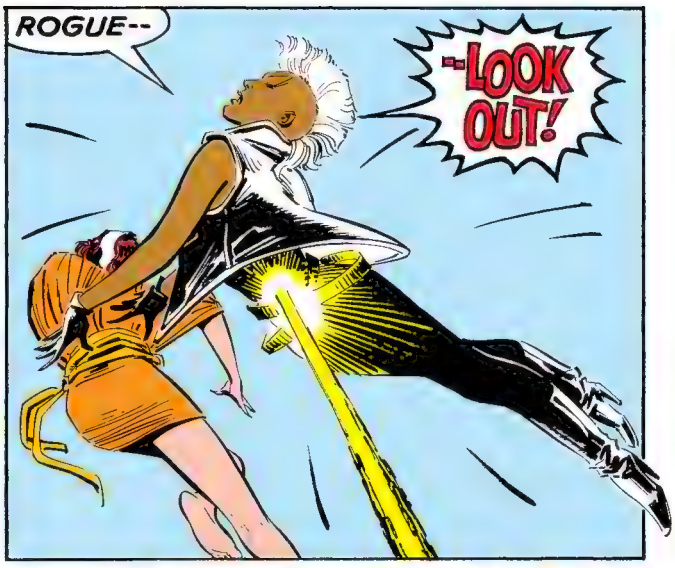

"AN' LOOK--THEY'RE BRINGIN' IN RE-INFORCEMENTS!"
"I KNOW OF THE NEUTRALIZER, ROGUE. MYSTIQUE TOLD ME WHEN SHE TOLD ME WHERE TO FIND YOU."*

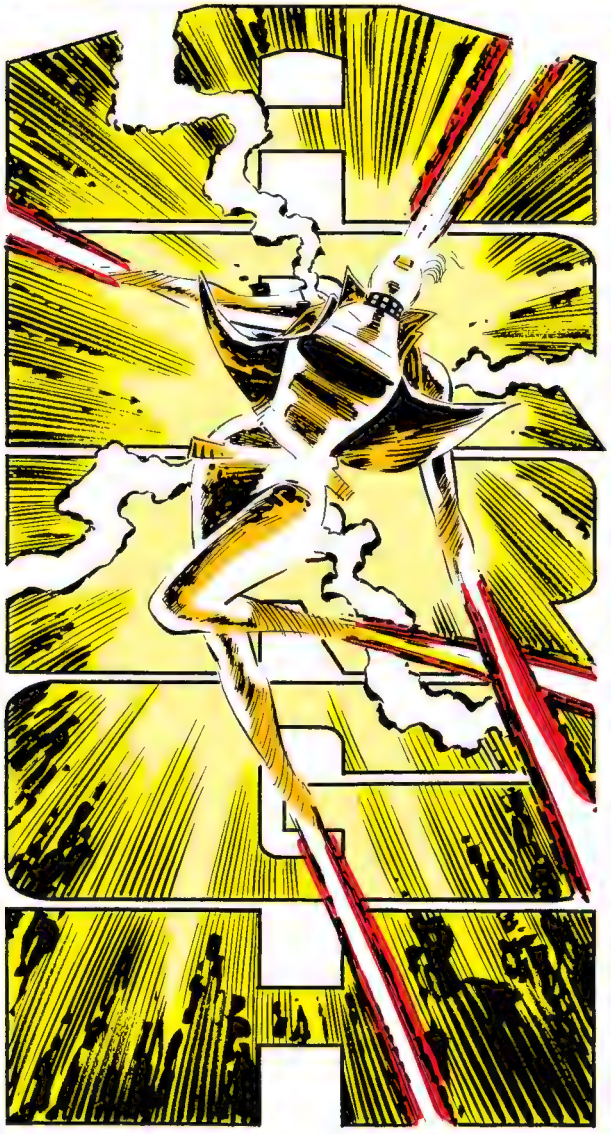
*FOR THAT STORY, SEE FUTURE ISSUES OF MARVEL FANFARE --ANN.

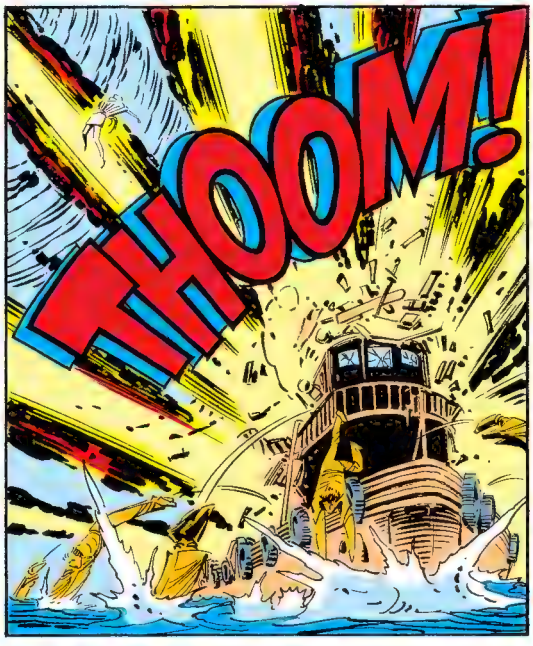


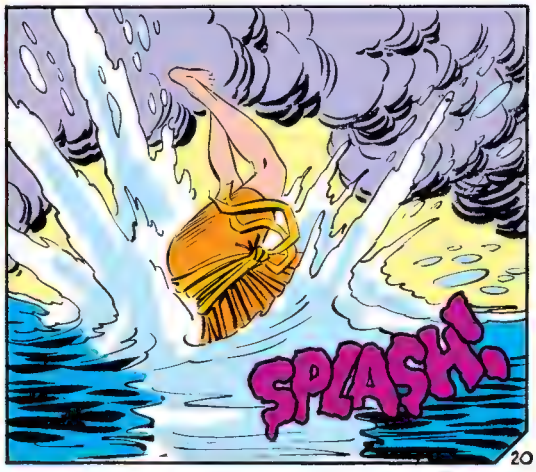
THE CURRENT IS TOO SWIFT--THE WATER TOO ROUGH--IF WE ABANDON THE VESSEL AND IT SINKS, ITS CREW MAY DROWN.
OUR POWERS--OUR PRESENCE--PLACED THEM IN DANGER, ROGUE!
WE MUST SAVE THEM IF WE CAN, REGARDLESS OF THE DANGER.

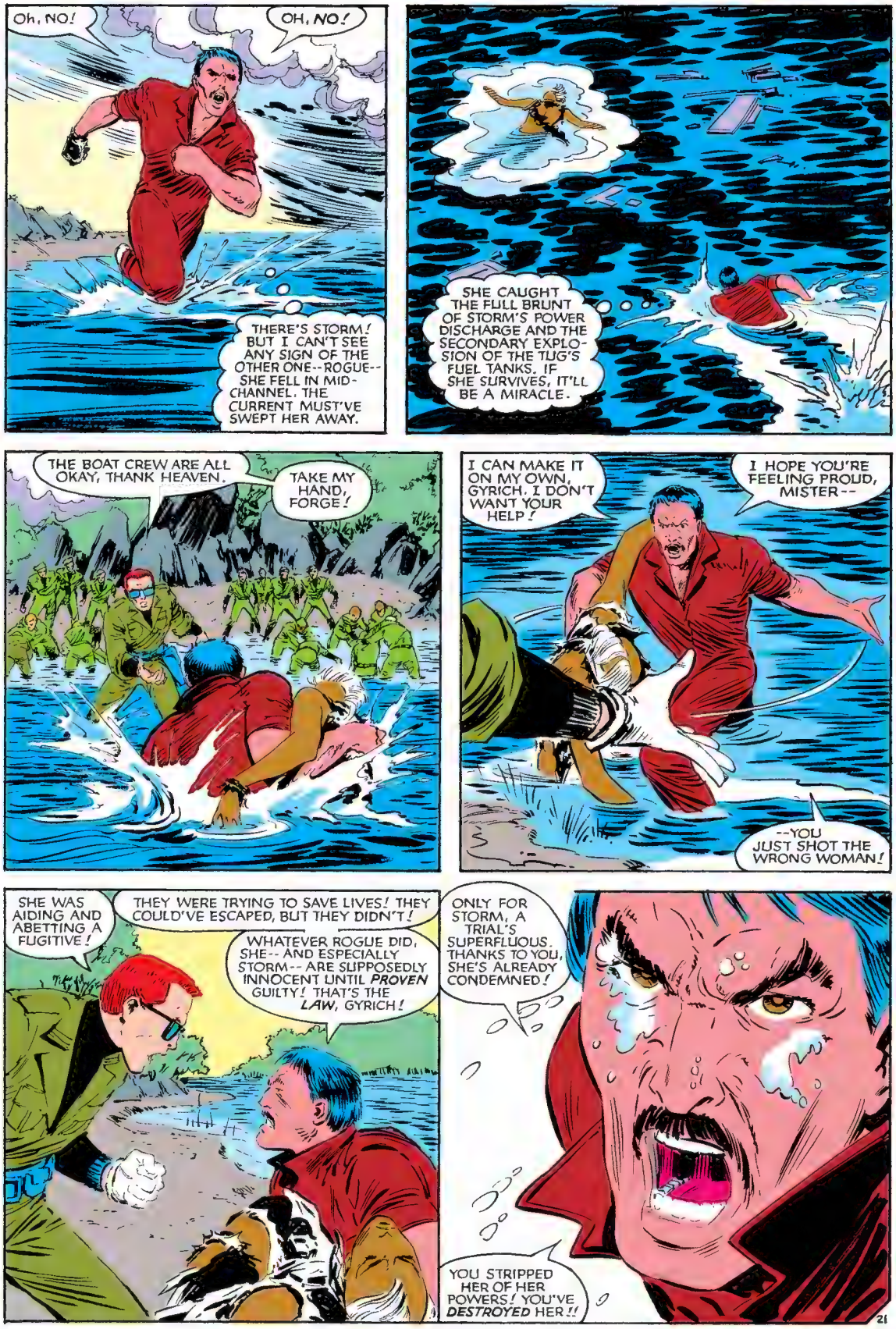
GYRICH--
DON'T!


ROGUE--
--LOOK OUT!



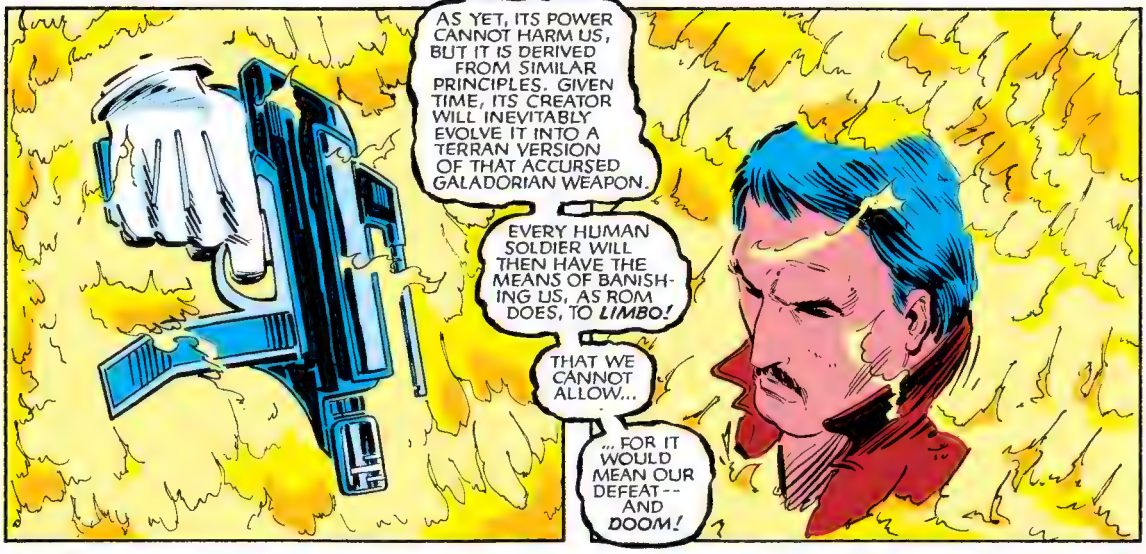

THOOM!


SPLASH!


Oh, NO!
OH, NO!
THERE'S STORM! BUT I CAN'T SEE ANY SIGN OF THE OTHER ONE--ROGUE--SHE FELL IN MID-CHANNEL. THE CURRENT MUST'VE SWEPT HER AWAY.
SHE CAUGHT THE FULL BRUNT OF STORM'S POWER DISCHARGE AND THE SECONDARY EXPLOSION OF THE TUG'S FUEL TANKS. IF SHE SURVIVES, IT'LL BE A MIRACLE.
THE BOAT CREW ARE ALL OKAY, THANK HEAVEN.
TAKE MY HAND, FORGE!
I CAN MAKE IT ON MY OWN, GYRICH. I DON'T WANT YOUR HELP!
I HOPE YOU'RE FEELING PROUD, MISTER--
--YOU JUST SHOT THE WRONG WOMAN!
SHE WAS AIDING AND ABETTING A FUGITIVE!
THEY WERE TRYING TO SAVE LIVES! THEY COULD'VE ESCAPED, BUT THEY DIDN'T!
WHATEVER ROGUE DID, SHE-- AND ESPECIALLY STORM-- ARE SUPPOSEDLY INNOCENT UNTIL *PROVEN* GUILTY! THAT'S THE *LAW*, GYRICH!
ONLY FOR STORM, A TRIAL'S SUPERFLUOUS. THANKS TO YOU, SHE'S ALREADY CONDEMNED!
YOU STRIPPED HER OF HER POWERS! YOU'VE *DESTROYED* HER!!

AND THERE'S NO WAY SHE CAN EVER BE MADE WHOLE AGAIN!
OUTLAWS THEY MAY BE-- IN THE EYES OF THE GOVERNMENT-- BUT THE X-MEN ALWAYS FOUGHT FOR HUMANITY!
YOUR STUPIDITY HAS HAS CHANGED THAT. YOU MAY SINGLE-HANDEDLY HAVE TURNED THEM FROM OUR DEFENDERS TO OUR DEADLIEST ENEMIES.

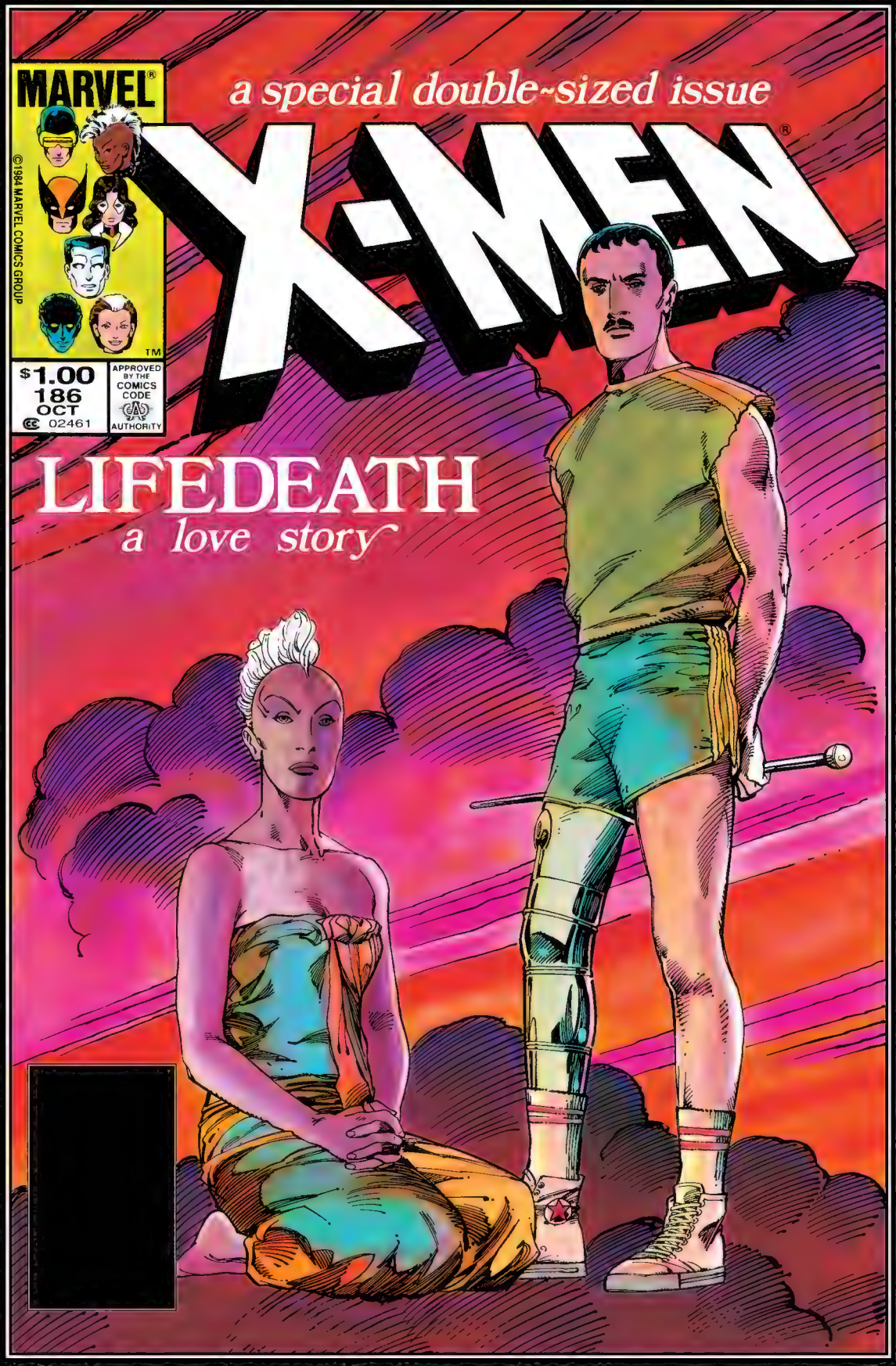
BEHOLD, SISTERS, IN OUR MYSTIC SCRYING POOL...
...THE FOREMOST THREAT TO THE DIRE WRAITHS YET POSED BY THESE UPSTART MAMMALS.
THAT MECHANISM IS A PRIMITIVE ANALOGUE TO THE NEUTRALIZER USED AGAINST US BY OUR MOST DREAD FOE, THE GALADORIAN SILVER SPACEKNIGHT, ROM!


AS YET, ITS POWER CANNOT HARM US, BUT IT IS DERIVED FROM SIMILAR PRINCIPLES. GIVEN TIME, ITS CREATOR WILL INEVITABLY EVOLVE IT INTO A TERRAN VERSION OF THAT ACCURSED GALADORIAN WEAPON.
EVERY HUMAN SOLDIER WILL THEN HAVE THE MEANS OF BANISHING US, AS ROM DOES, TO LIMBO!
THAT WE CANNOT ALLOW...
...FOR IT WOULD MEAN OUR DEFEAT-- AND DOOM!

NEXT:

LIFE-DEATH

BY CHRIS CLAREMONT, BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH AND TERRY AUSTIN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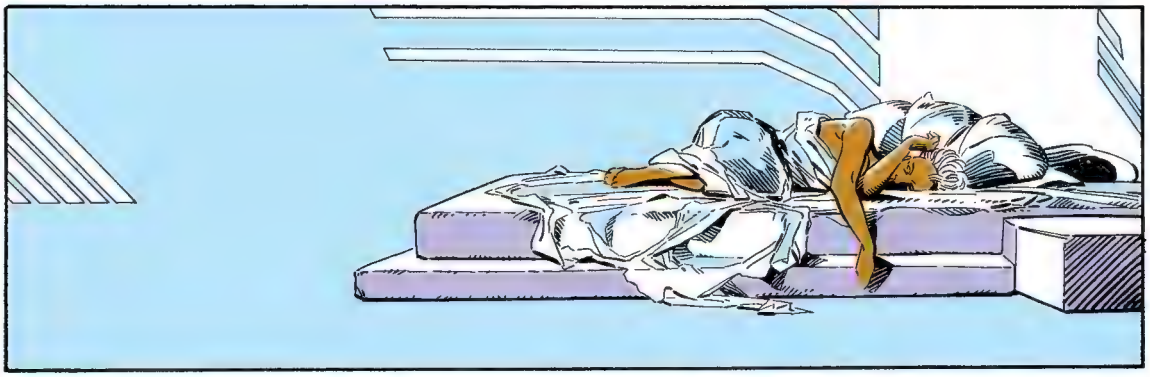
a special double-sized issue
X-MEN
LIFEDEATH
a love story

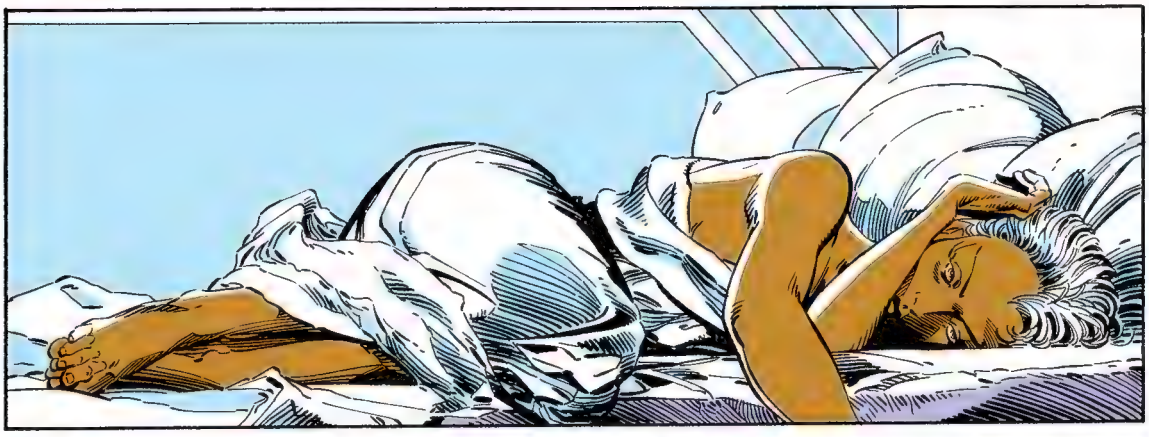
Stan Lee presents the uncanny X-Men

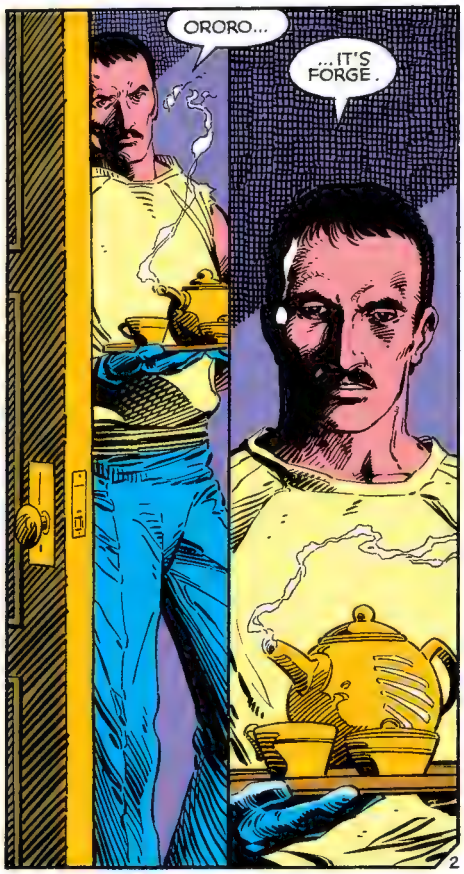
LIFEDEATH

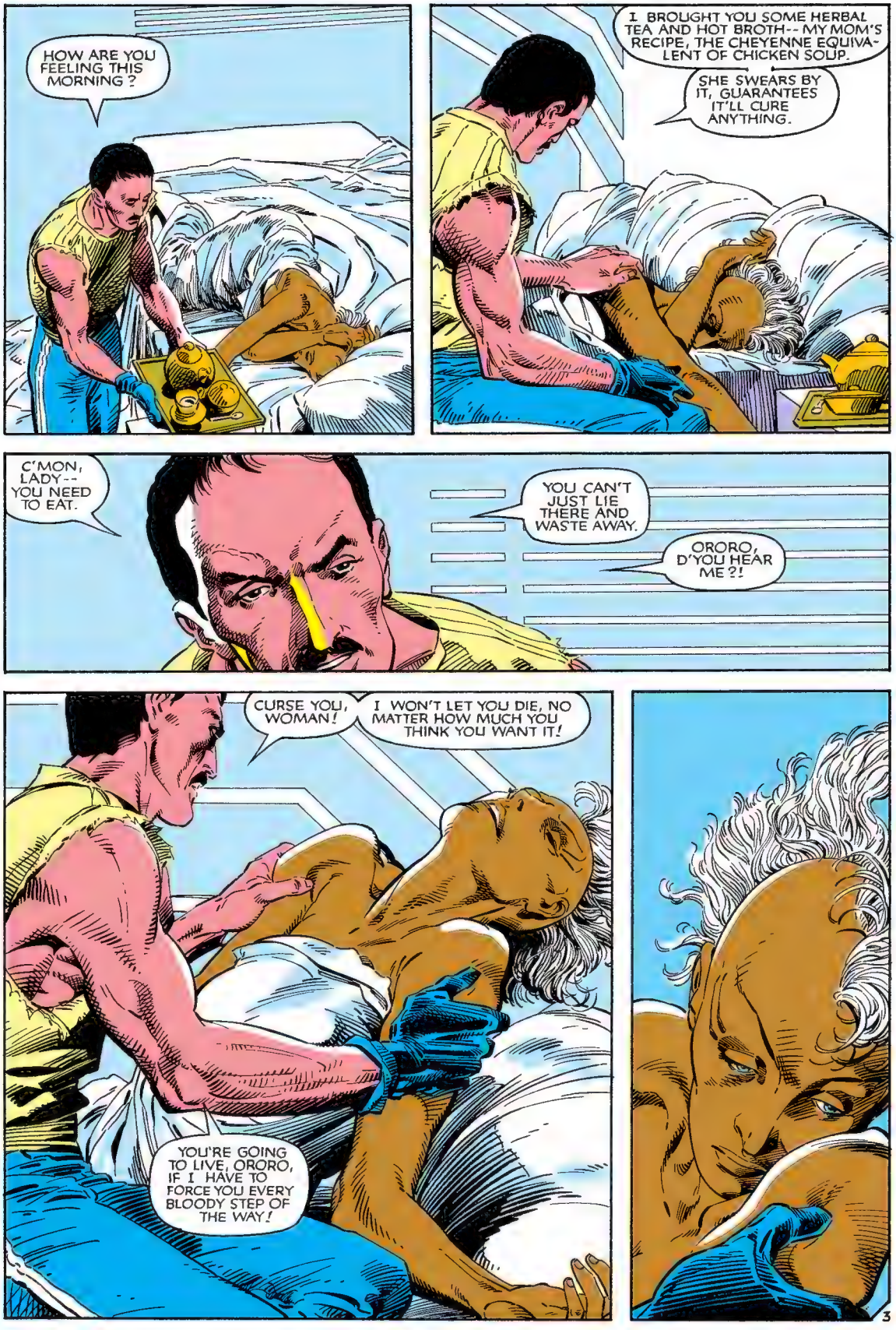
CHRIS CLAREMONT · BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH · TERRY AUSTIN
SCRIPT — STORY — PENCILS — INKER

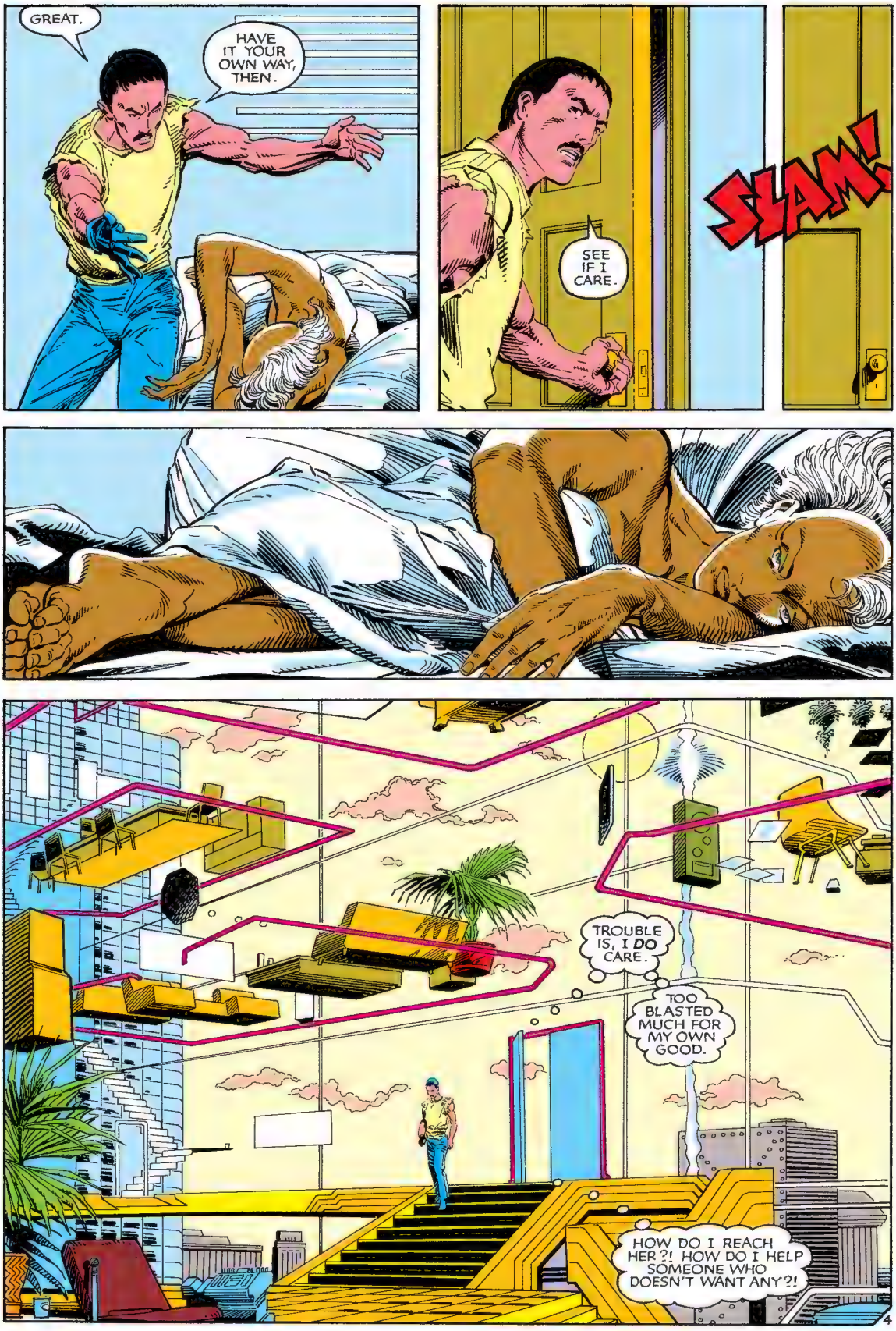
WEIN & SCHEELE *colorists* · TOM ORZECHOWSKI, *letterer* · ANN NOCENTI, *editor* · JIM SHOOTER, *editor-in-chief*



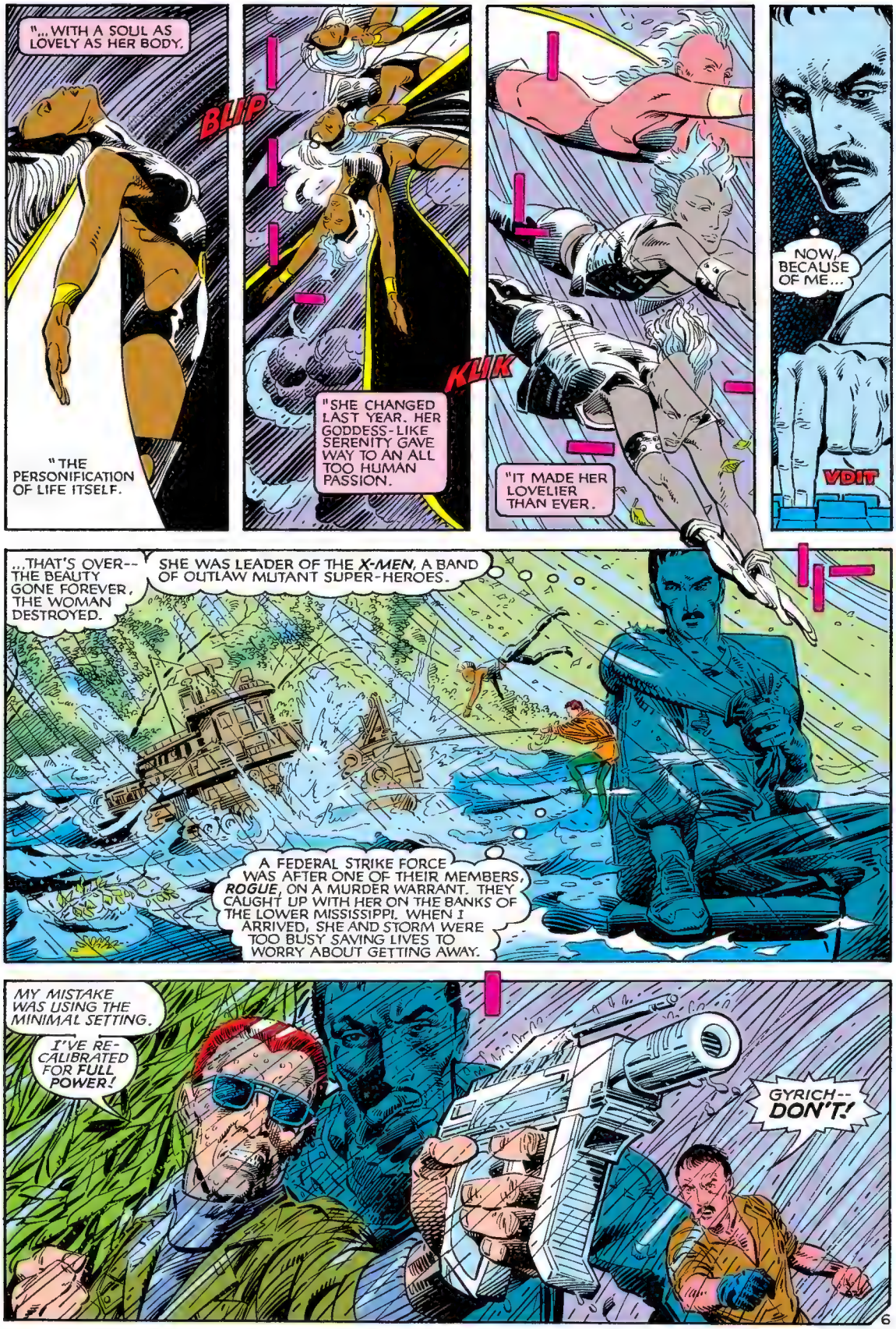


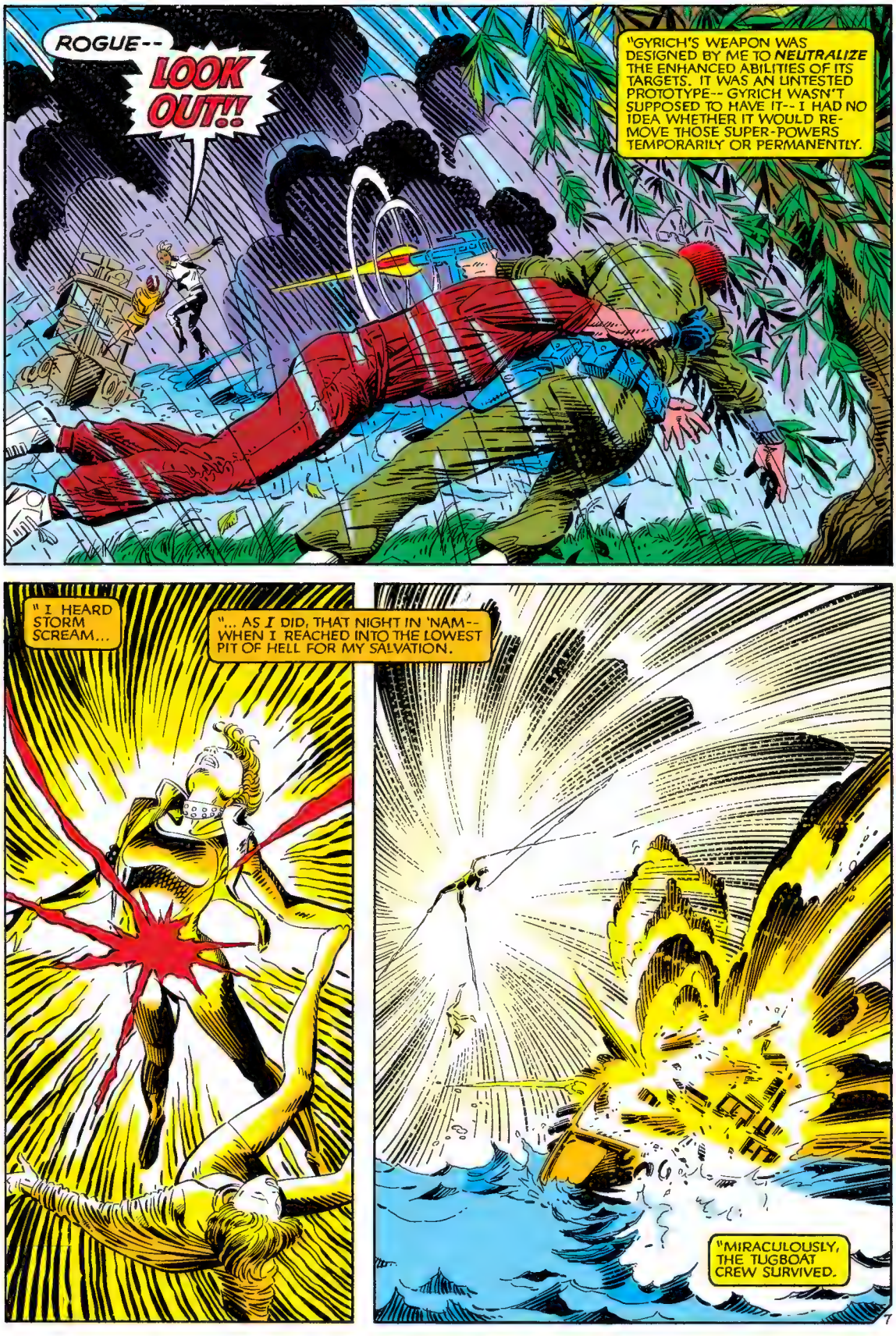

ORORO...
...IT'S FORGE.

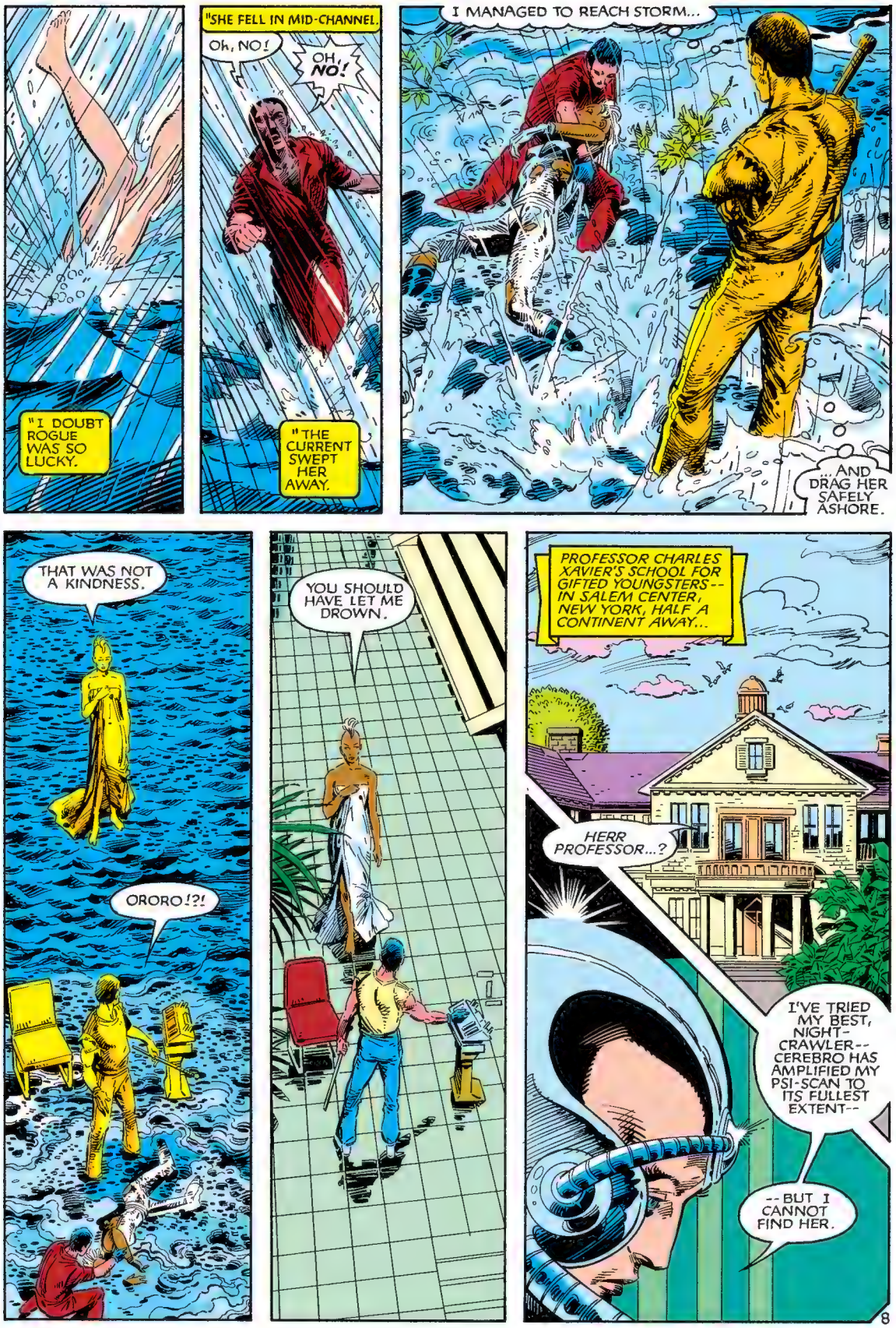

HOW ARE YOU FEELING THIS MORNING ?
I BROUGHT YOU SOME HERBAL TEA AND HOT BROTH-- MY MOM'S RECIPE, THE CHEYENNE EQUIVALENT OF CHICKEN SOUP.
SHE SWEARS BY IT, GUARANTEES IT'LL CURE ANYTHING.
C'MON, LADY-- YOU NEED TO EAT.
YOU CAN'T JUST LIE THERE AND WASTE AWAY.
ORORO, D'YOU HEAR ME ?!
CURSE YOU, WOMAN!
I WON'T LET YOU DIE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU THINK YOU WANT IT!
YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE, ORORO, IF I HAVE TO FORCE YOU EVERY BLOODY STEP OF THE WAY!

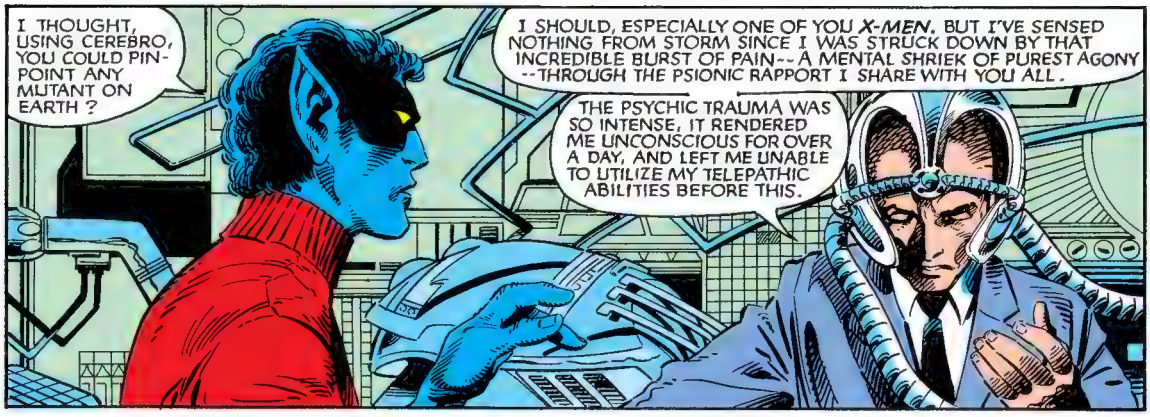

GREAT.
HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY, THEN.
SEE IF I CARE.
SLAM!
TROUBLE IS, I DO CARE.
TOO BLASTED MUCH FOR MY OWN GOOD.
HOW DO I REACH HER?! HOW DO I HELP SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT ANY?!

I'M DOING A WONDERFUL JOB SO FAR. MY PATIENT DOESN'T RESPOND TO THERAPY OR TENDER-LOVING-CARE. NO PROBLEM--
--I'LL SHOVE HER AWAY.
KLIK BDEEP
I'VE HURT HER SO MUCH ALREADY, WHAT'S A LITTLE MORE MATTER ?
WE'RE TWO OF A KIND, SHE AND I -- MUTANTS, THE NEXT STEP IN HUMANITY'S EVOLUTION, BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES. LUCKY US.
I'M THE MAKER. I BUILD THINGS-- LIKE THIS HOLOGRAPHIC DISPLAY SYSTEM.
RMMBLLLEE
STORM CONTROLLED THE ELEMENTS.
LORD, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL...

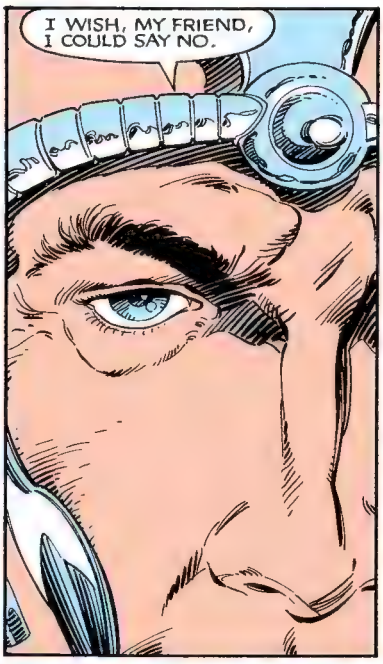

"...WITH A SOUL AS LOVELY AS HER BODY.
"THE PERSONIFICATION OF LIFE ITSELF.
BLIP
"SHE CHANGED LAST YEAR. HER GODDESS-LIKE SERENITY GAVE WAY TO AN ALL TOO HUMAN PASSION.
KLIK
"IT MADE HER LOVELIER THAN EVER.
NOW, BECAUSE OF ME...
VDIT
...THAT'S OVER--THE BEAUTY GONE FOREVER, THE WOMAN DESTROYED.
SHE WAS LEADER OF THE X-MEN, A BAND OF OUTLAW MUTANT SUPER-HEROES.
A FEDERAL STRIKE FORCE WAS AFTER ONE OF THEIR MEMBERS, ROGUE, ON A MURDER WARRANT. THEY CAUGHT UP WITH HER ON THE BANKS OF THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI. WHEN I ARRIVED, SHE AND STORM WERE TOO BUSY SAVING LIVES TO WORRY ABOUT GETTING AWAY.
MY MISTAKE WAS USING THE MINIMAL SETTING.
I'VE RE-CALIBRATED FOR FULL POWER!
GYRICH--DON'T!


ROGUE--
LOOK OUT!!
"GYRICH'S WEAPON WAS DESIGNED BY ME TO *NEUTRALIZE* THE ENHANCED ABILITIES OF ITS TARGETS. IT WAS AN UNTESTED PROTOTYPE-- GYRICH WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAVE IT-- I HAD NO IDEA WHETHER IT WOULD REMOVE THOSE SUPER-POWERS TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY.
"I HEARD STORM SCREAM...
"... AS *I* DID, THAT NIGHT IN 'NAM-- WHEN I REACHED INTO THE LOWEST PIT OF HELL FOR MY SALVATION.
"MIRACULOUSLY, THE TUGBOAT CREW SURVIVED.

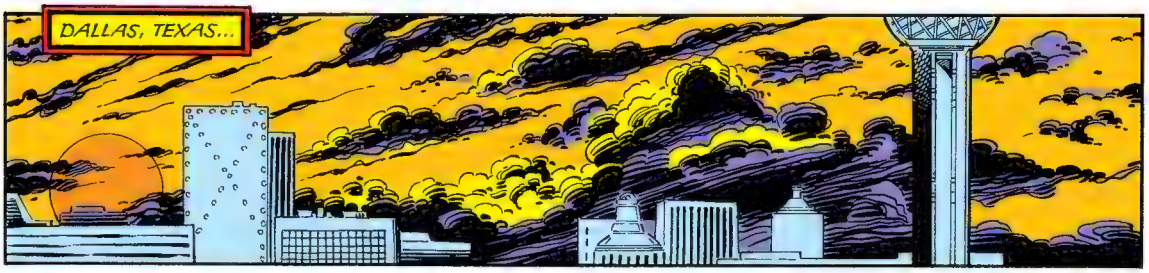

"I DOUBT ROGUE WAS SO LUCKY.
"SHE FELL IN MID-CHANNEL.
Oh, NO!
OH, NO!
"THE CURRENT SWEPT HER AWAY.
I MANAGED TO REACH STORM...
...AND DRAG HER SAFELY ASHORE.
THAT WAS NOT A KINDNESS.
ORORO!?!
YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME DROWN.
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS--IN SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK, HALF A CONTINENT AWAY...
HERR PROFESSOR...?
I'VE TRIED MY BEST, NIGHT-CRAWLER--CEREBRO HAS AMPLIFIED MY PSI-SCAN TO ITS FULLEST EXTENT--
--BUT I CANNOT FIND HER.

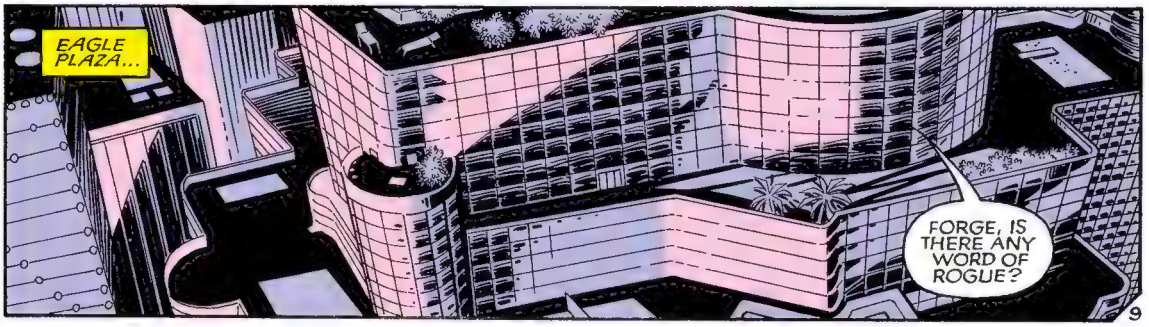

I THOUGHT, USING CEREBRO, YOU COULD PIN-POINT ANY MUTANT ON EARTH ?
I SHOULD, ESPECIALLY ONE OF YOU X-MEN. BUT I'VE SENSED NOTHING FROM STORM SINCE I WAS STRUCK DOWN BY THAT INCREDIBLE BURST OF PAIN--A MENTAL SHRIEK OF PUREST AGONY --THROUGH THE PSIONIC RAPPORT I SHARE WITH YOU ALL.
THE PSYCHIC TRAUMA WAS SO INTENSE, IT RENDERED ME UNCONSCIOUS FOR OVER A DAY, AND LEFT ME UNABLE TO UTILIZE MY TELEPATHIC ABILITIES BEFORE THIS.

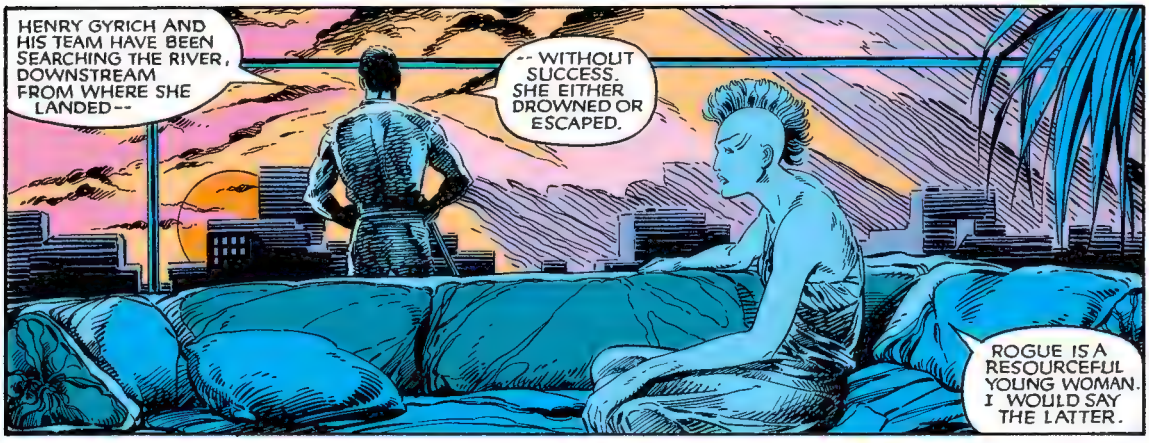
PROFESSOR, WAS WHAT YOU FELT...
...ORORO'S DEATH ?


I WISH, MY FRIEND, I COULD SAY NO.

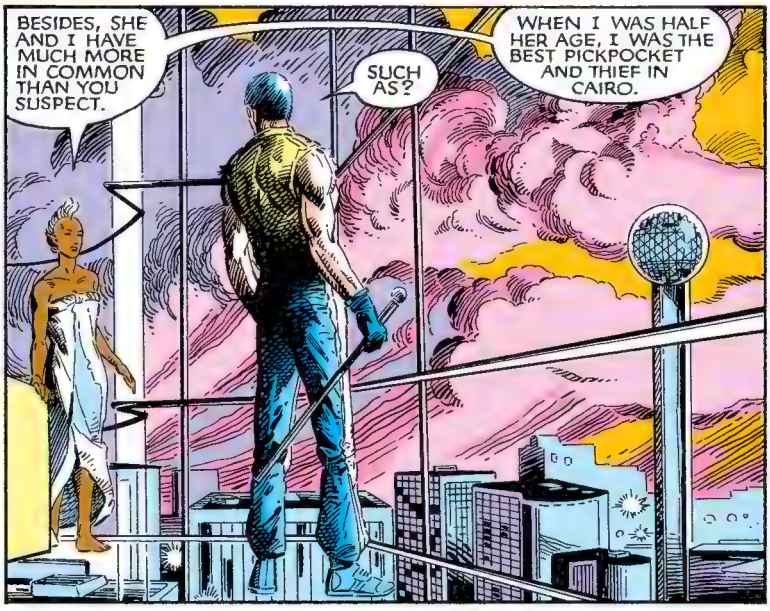
HOWEVER, LET'S ASSUME SHE'S STILL ALIVE, AND SOMEHOW SHIELDED FROM MY PROBES. SHE LEFT THE MANSION IN SEARCH OF ROGUE.
I'LL SCAN FOR HER. PERHAPS SHE CAN LEAD US TO STORM, OR TELL US OF HER FATE.


DALLAS, TEXAS...


EAGLE PLAZA...
FORGE, IS THERE ANY WORD OF ROGUE?


HENRY GYRICH AND HIS TEAM HAVE BEEN SEARCHING THE RIVER, DOWNSTREAM FROM WHERE SHE LANDED--
-- WITHOUT SUCCESS. SHE EITHER DROWNED OR ESCAPED.
ROGUE IS A RESOURCEFUL YOUNG WOMAN. I WOULD SAY THE LATTER.

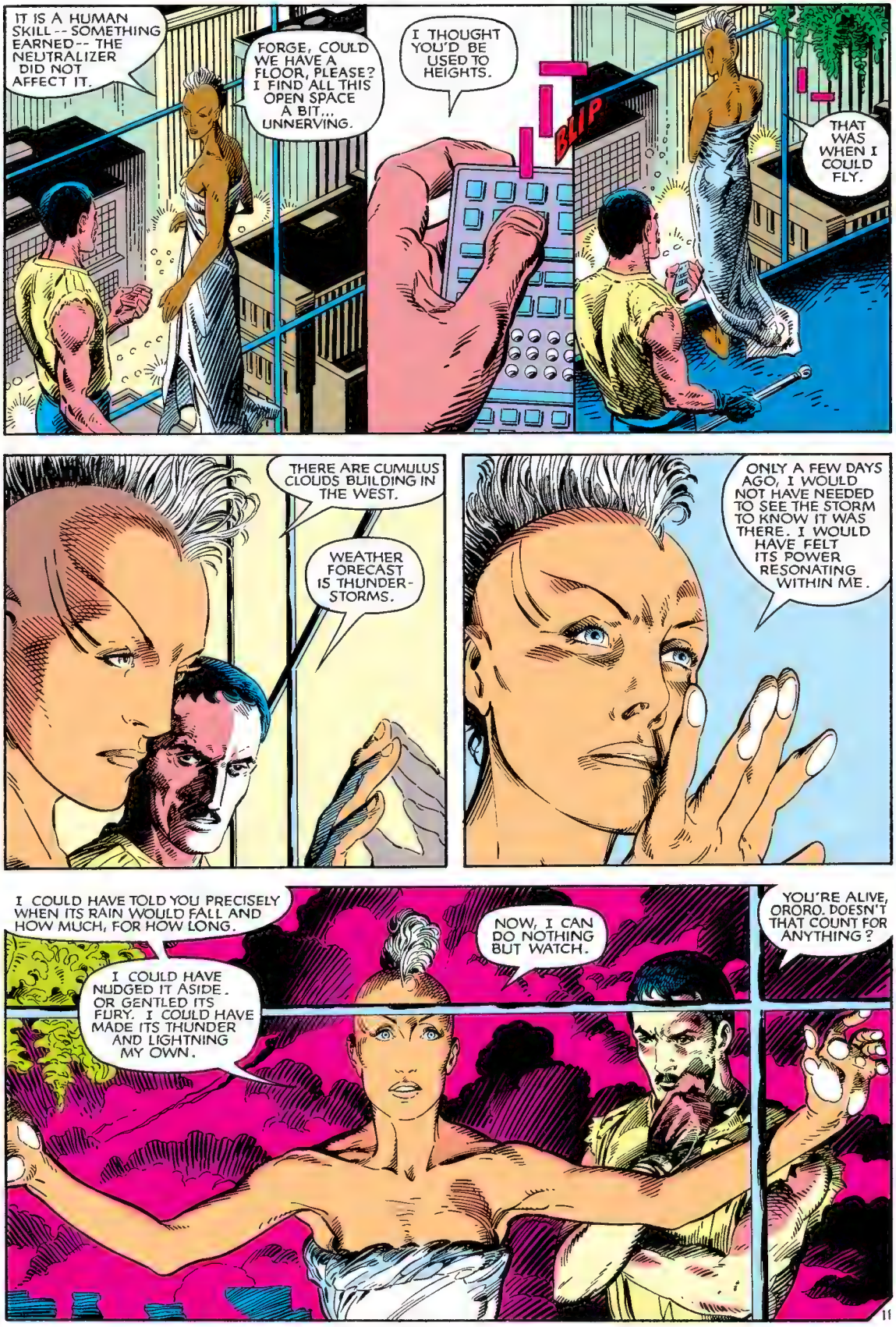
WHAT BROUGHT THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER, ANYWAY? SHE'S A CROOK, PART OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
NO LONGER.

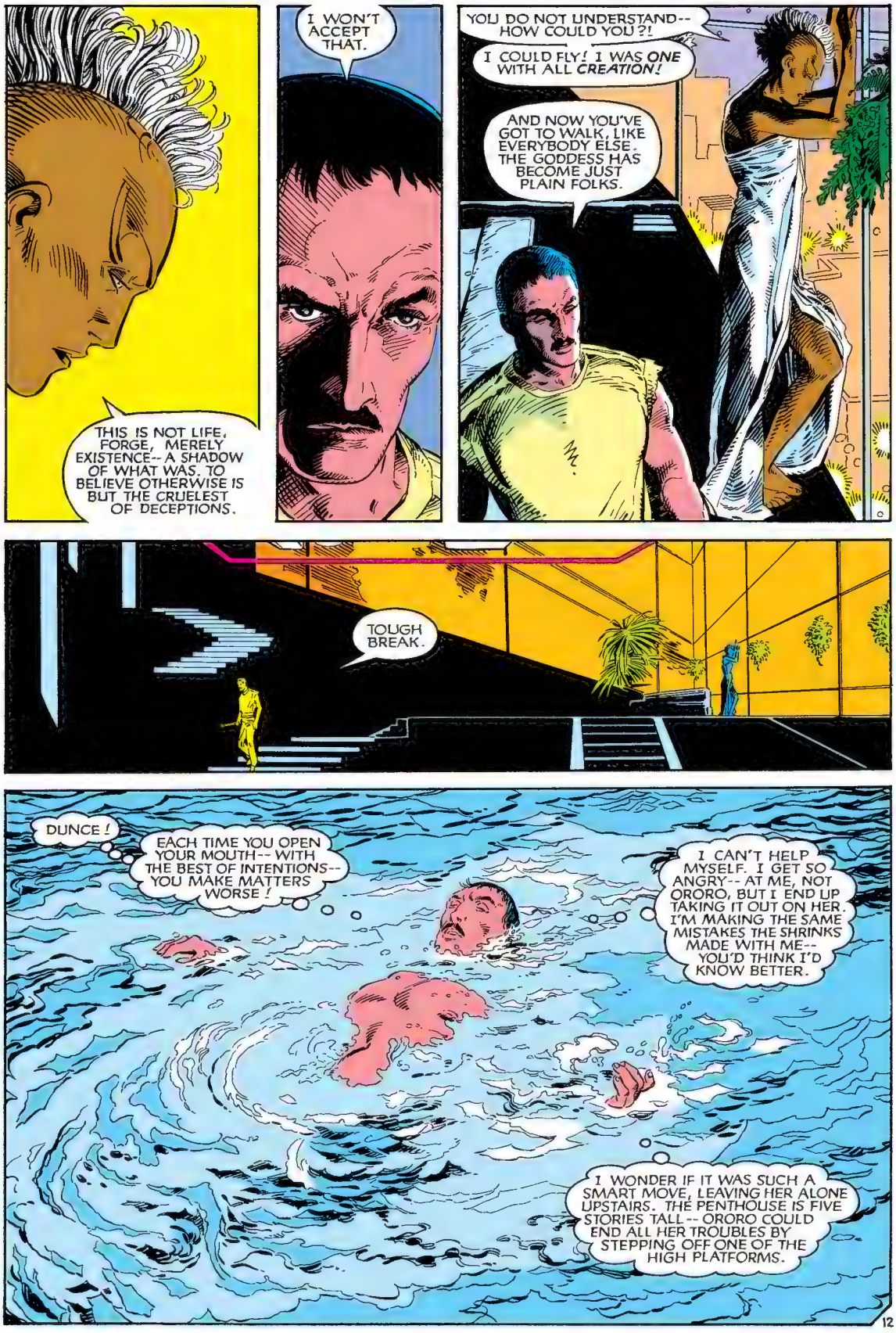

BESIDES, SHE AND I HAVE MUCH MORE IN COMMON THAN YOU SUSPECT.
SUCH AS?
WHEN I WAS HALF HER AGE, I WAS THE BEST PICKPOCKET AND THIEF IN CAIRO.

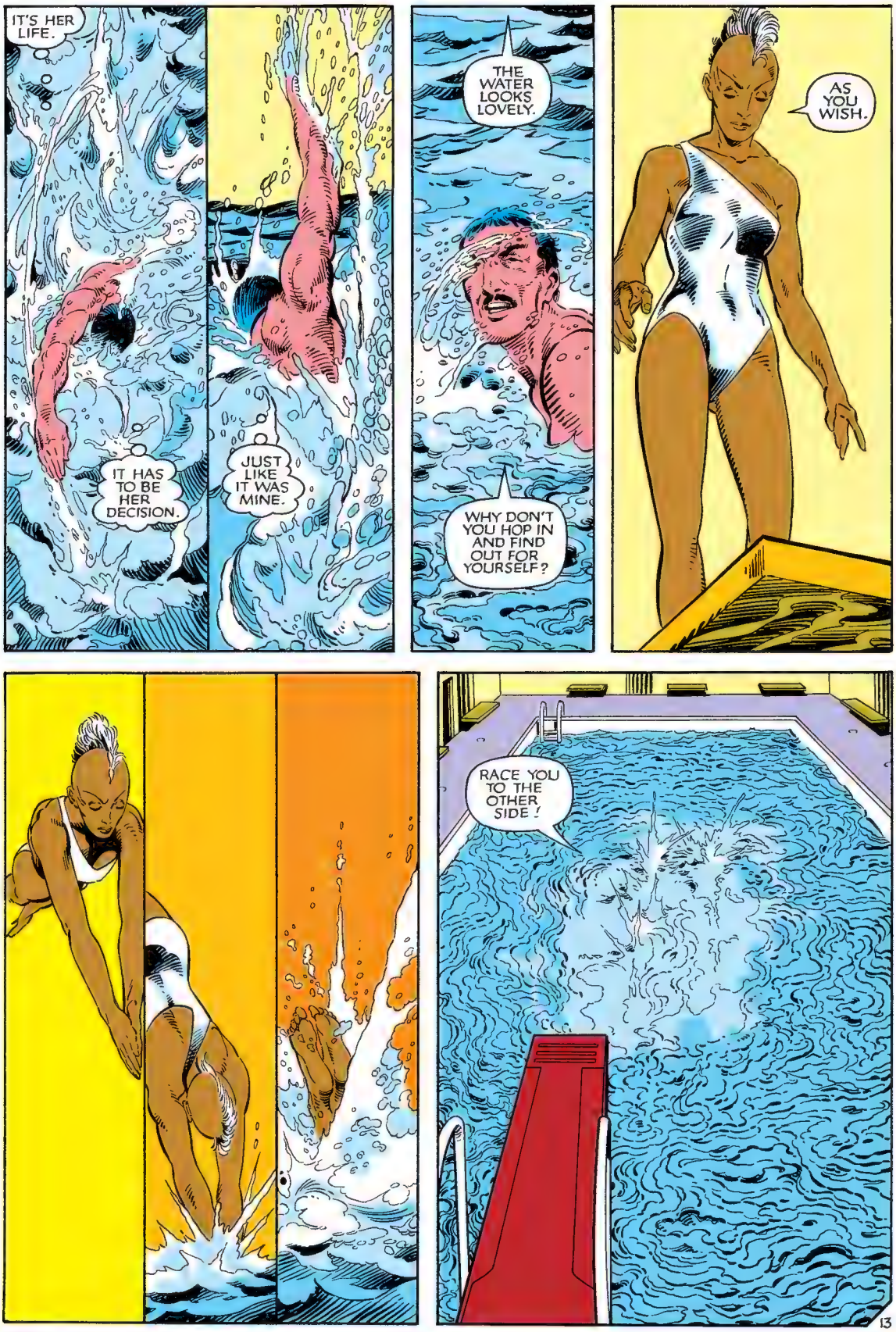
YOU'RE KIDDING ME!
NO.
MY PORTA-CONSOLE--! IT WAS IN MY BACK POCKET!

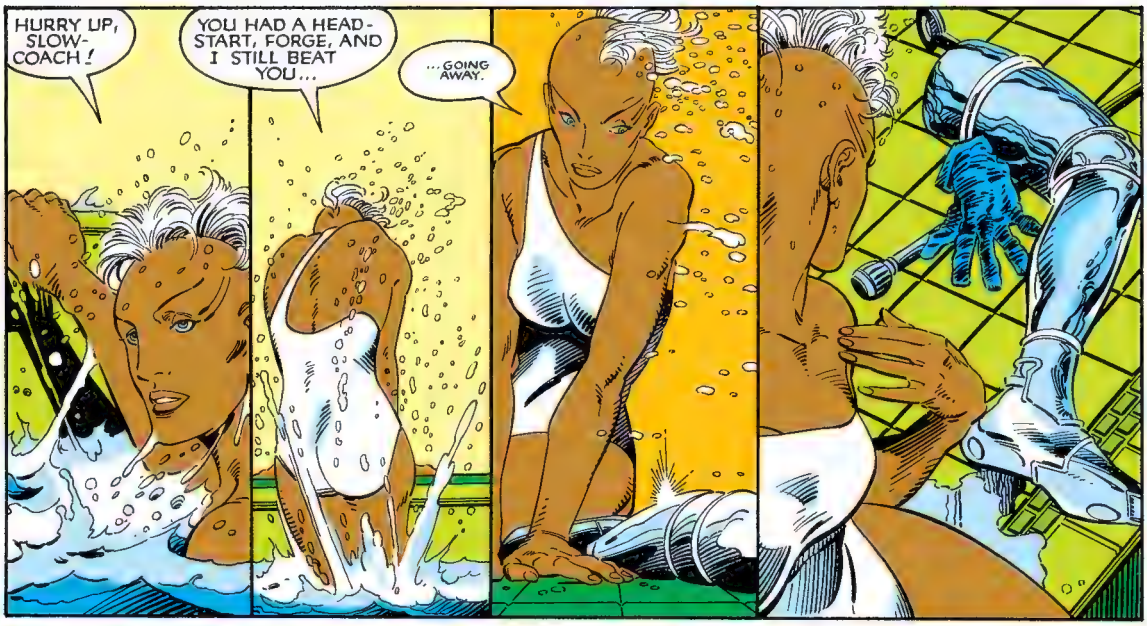
CHILD'S-PLAY.

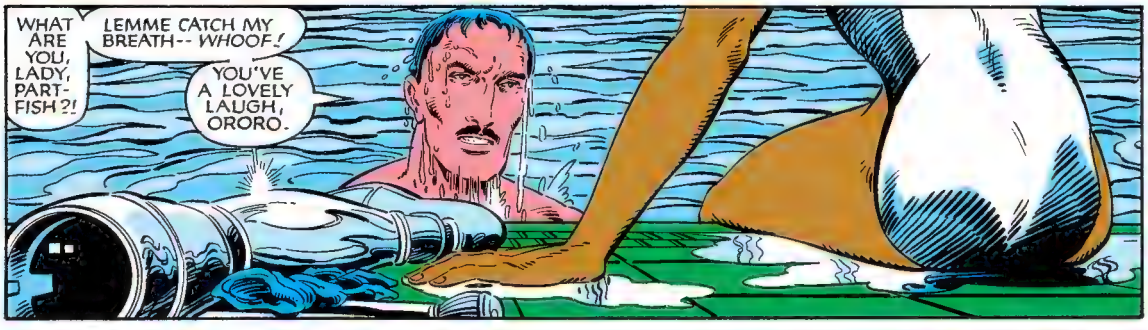
YOU CERTAINLY HAVEN'T LOST YOUR TOUCH.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL.

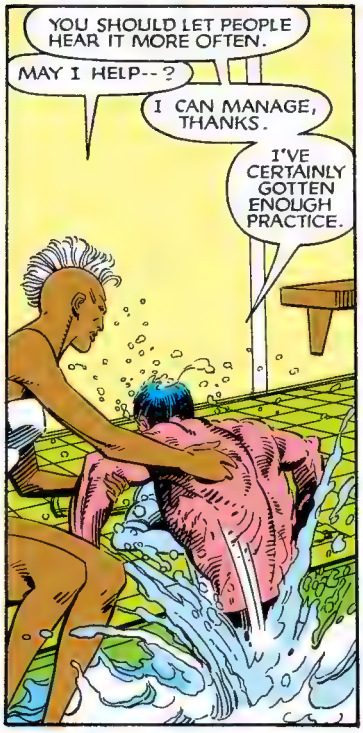

IT IS A HUMAN SKILL -- SOMETHING EARNED-- THE NEUTRALIZER DID NOT AFFECT IT.
FORGE, COULD WE HAVE A FLOOR, PLEASE? I FIND ALL THIS OPEN SPACE A BIT... UNNERVING.
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE USED TO HEIGHTS.
BLIP
THAT WAS WHEN I COULD FLY.
THERE ARE CUMULUS CLOUDS BUILDING IN THE WEST.
WEATHER FORECAST IS THUNDER-STORMS.
ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, I WOULD NOT HAVE NEEDED TO SEE THE STORM TO KNOW IT WAS THERE. I WOULD HAVE FELT ITS POWER RESONATING WITHIN ME.
I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU PRECISELY WHEN ITS RAIN WOULD FALL AND HOW MUCH, FOR HOW LONG.
I COULD HAVE NUDGED IT ASIDE. OR GENTLED ITS FURY. I COULD HAVE MADE ITS THUNDER AND LIGHTNING MY OWN.
NOW, I CAN DO NOTHING BUT WATCH.
YOU'RE ALIVE, ORORO. DOESN'T THAT COUNT FOR ANYTHING?

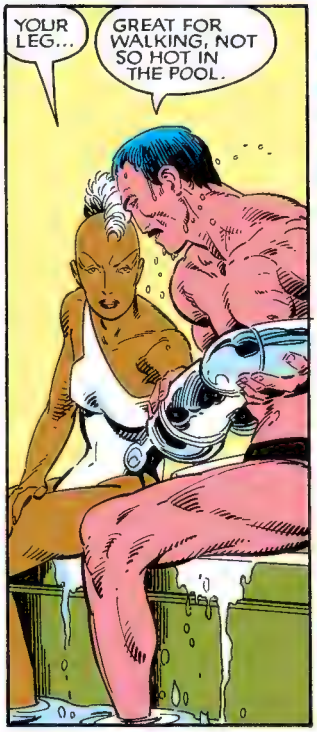

THIS IS NOT LIFE, FORGE, MERELY EXISTENCE-- A SHADOW OF WHAT WAS. TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE IS BUT THE CRUELEST OF DECEPTIONS.
I WON'T ACCEPT THAT.
YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND-- HOW COULD YOU?!
I COULD FLY! I WAS ONE WITH ALL CREATION!
AND NOW YOU'VE GOT TO WALK, LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. THE GODDESS HAS BECOME JUST PLAIN FOLKS.
TOUGH BREAK.
DUNCE!
EACH TIME YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH-- WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS-- YOU MAKE MATTERS WORSE!
I CAN'T HELP MYSELF. I GET SO ANGRY-- AT ME, NOT ORORO, BUT I END UP TAKING IT OUT ON HER. I'M MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES THE SHRINKS MADE WITH ME-- YOU'D THINK I'D KNOW BETTER.
I WONDER IF IT WAS SUCH A SMART MOVE, LEAVING HER ALONE UPSTAIRS. THE PENTHOUSE IS FIVE STORIES TALL-- ORORO COULD END ALL HER TROUBLES BY STEPPING OFF ONE OF THE HIGH PLATFORMS.

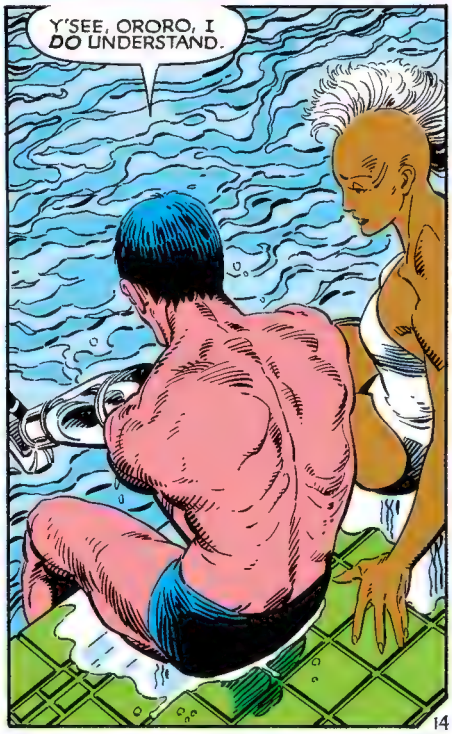

IT'S HER LIFE.
IT HAS TO BE HER DECISION.
JUST LIKE IT WAS MINE.
THE WATER LOOKS LOVELY.
WHY DON'T YOU HOP IN AND FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF?
AS YOU WISH.
RACE YOU TO THE OTHER SIDE!

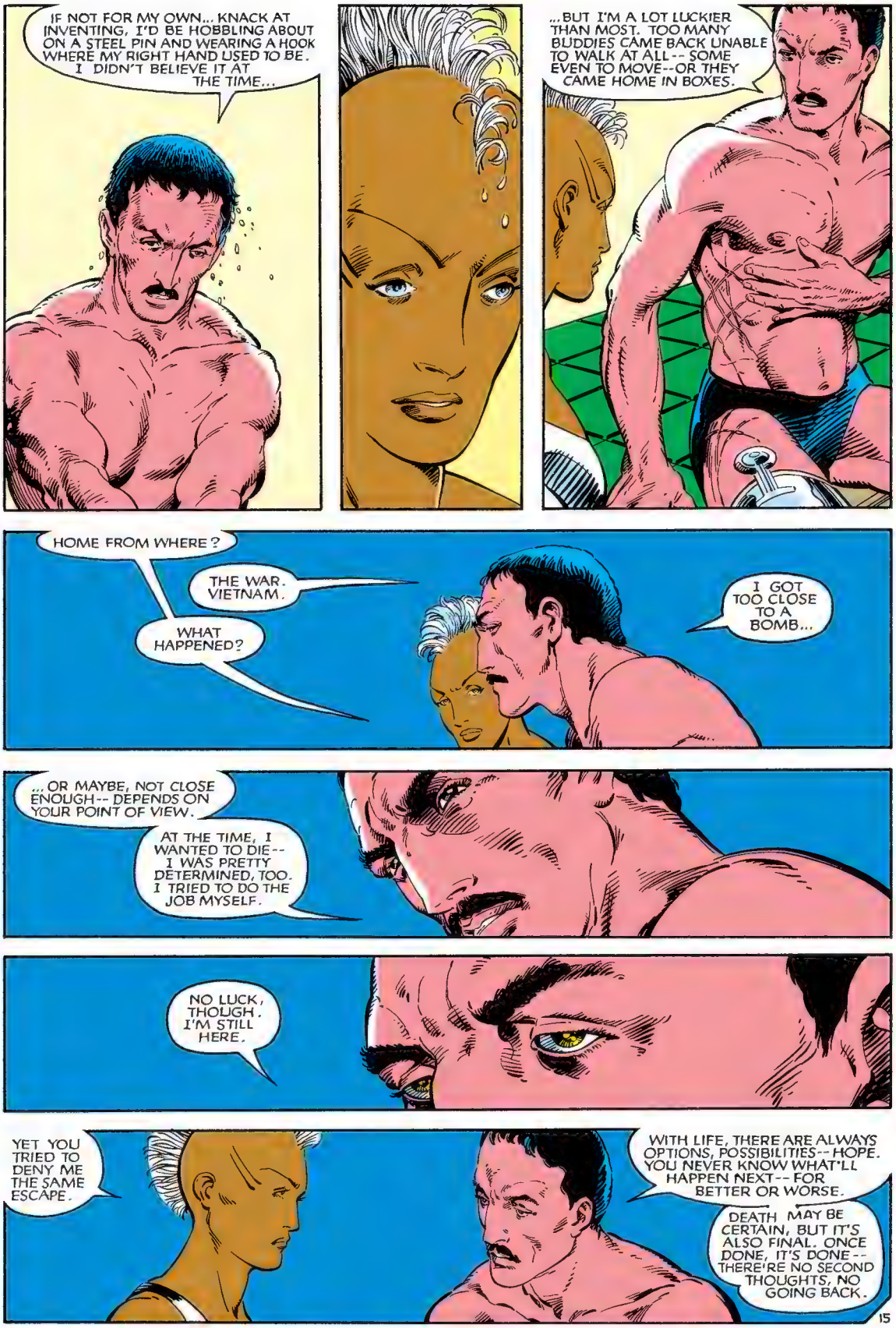

HURRY UP, SLOW-COACH!
YOU HAD A HEAD-START, FORGE, AND I STILL BEAT YOU...
...GOING AWAY.

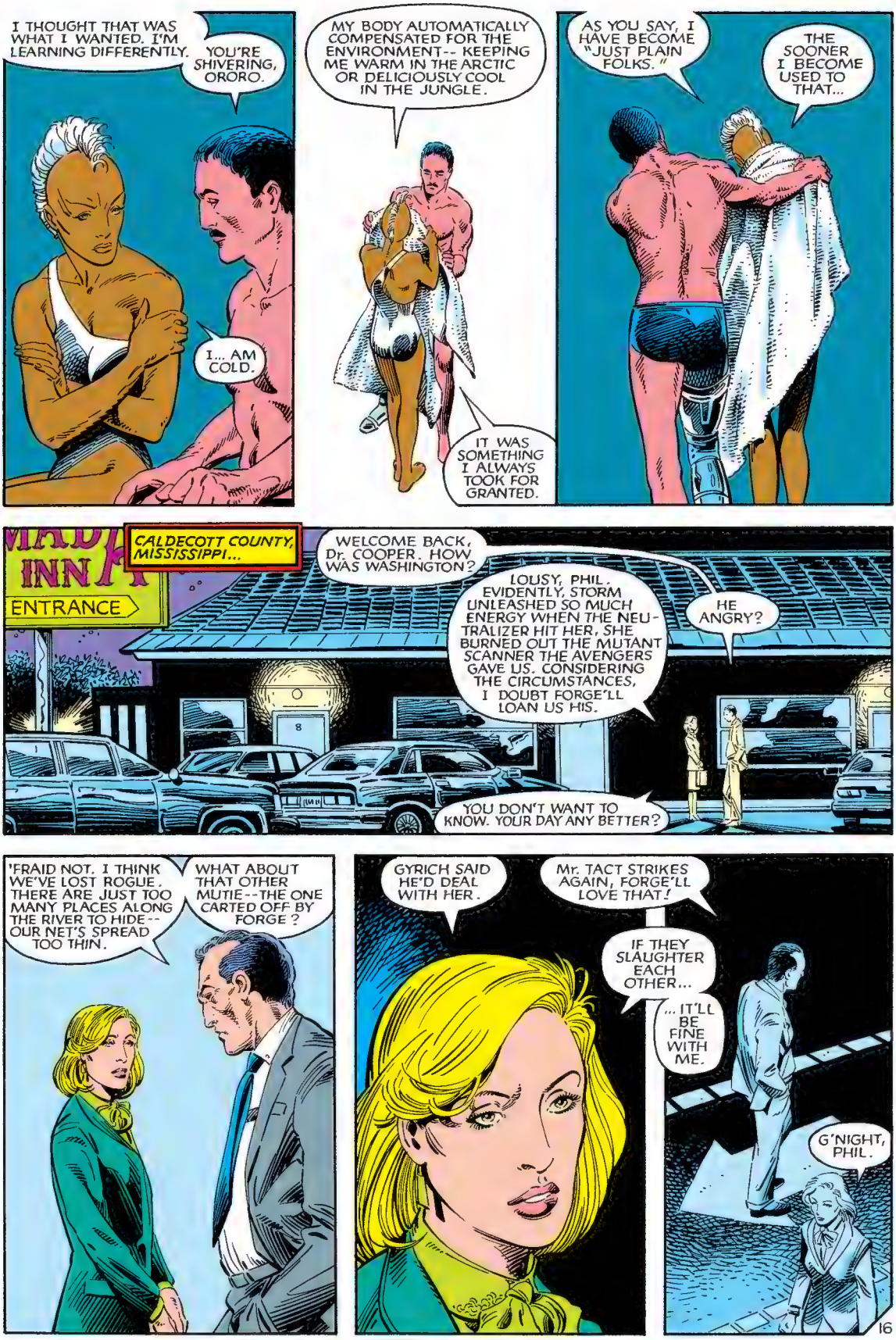

WHAT ARE YOU, LADY, PART-FISH?!
LEMME CATCH MY BREATH-- WHOOF!
YOU'VE A LOVELY LAUGH, ORORO.

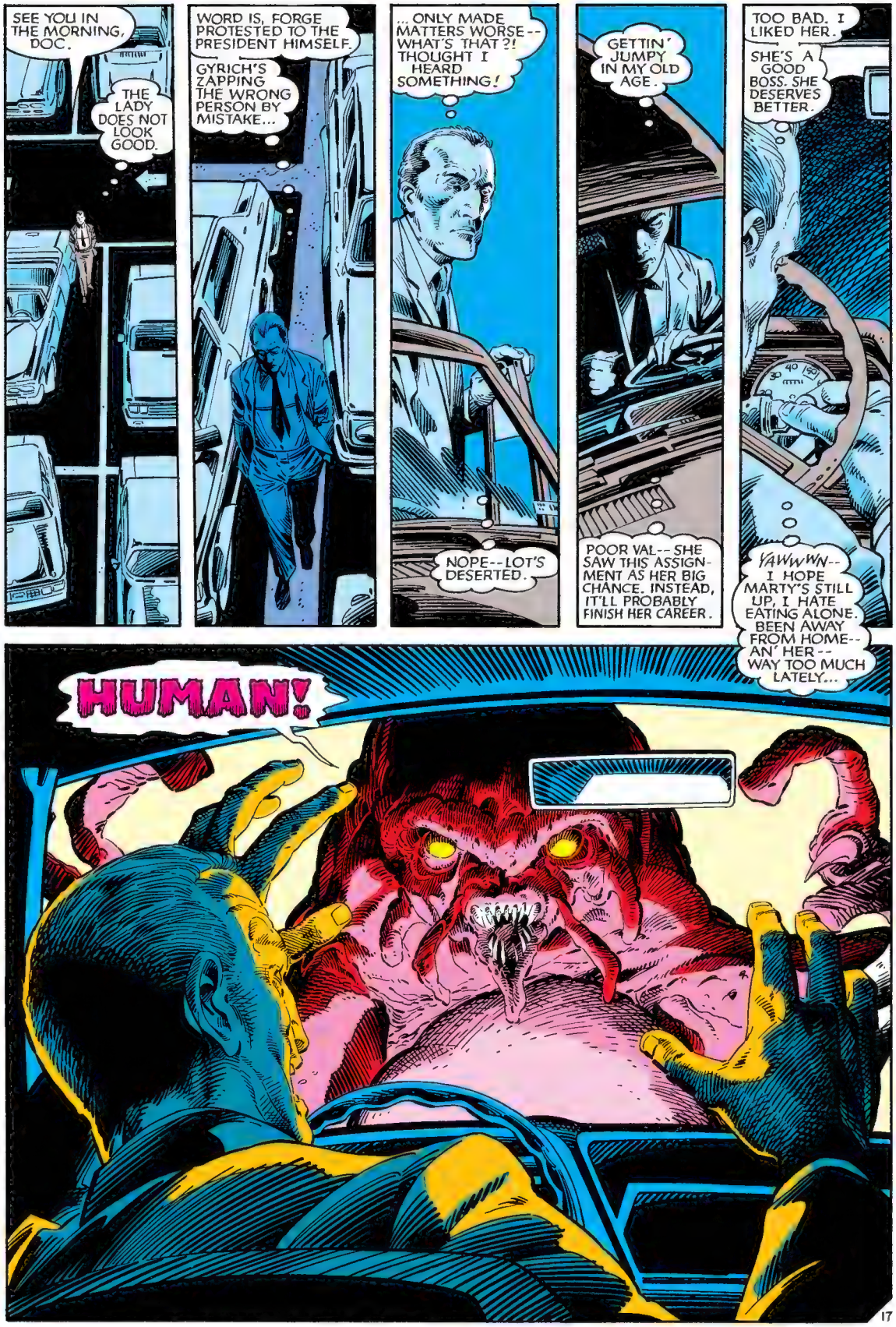

YOU SHOULD LET PEOPLE HEAR IT MORE OFTEN.
MAY I HELP--?
I CAN MANAGE, THANKS.
I'VE CERTAINLY GOTTEN ENOUGH PRACTICE.


YOUR LEG...
GREAT FOR WALKING, NOT SO HOT IN THE POOL.

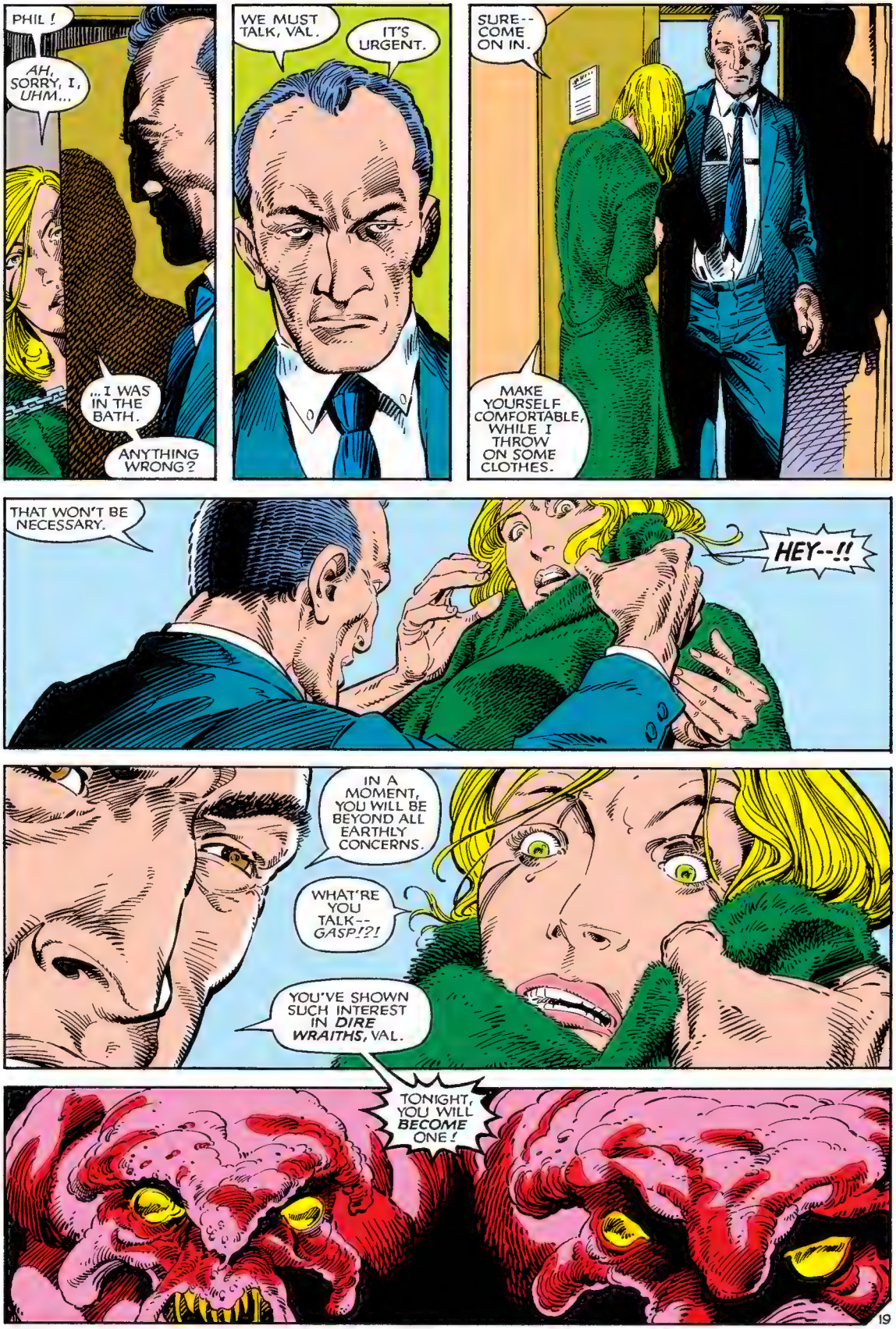

Y'SEE, ORORO, I DO UNDERSTAND.


IF NOT FOR MY OWN... KNACK AT INVENTING, I'D BE HOBBLING ABOUT ON A STEEL PIN AND WEARING A HOOK WHERE MY RIGHT HAND USED TO BE. I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT AT THE TIME...
...BUT I'M A LOT LUCKIER THAN MOST. TOO MANY BUDDIES CAME BACK UNABLE TO WALK AT ALL-- SOME EVEN TO MOVE--OR THEY CAME HOME IN BOXES.
HOME FROM WHERE?
THE WAR. VIETNAM.
WHAT HAPPENED?
I GOT TOO CLOSE TO A BOMB...
...OR MAYBE, NOT CLOSE ENOUGH-- DEPENDS ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW.
AT THE TIME, I WANTED TO DIE-- I WAS PRETTY DETERMINED, TOO. I TRIED TO DO THE JOB MYSELF.
NO LUCK, THOUGH. I'M STILL HERE.
YET YOU TRIED TO DENY ME THE SAME ESCAPE.
WITH LIFE, THERE ARE ALWAYS OPTIONS, POSSIBILITIES-- HOPE. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN NEXT-- FOR BETTER OR WORSE.
DEATH MAY BE CERTAIN, BUT IT'S ALSO FINAL. ONCE DONE, IT'S DONE-- THERE'RE NO SECOND THOUGHTS, NO GOING BACK.

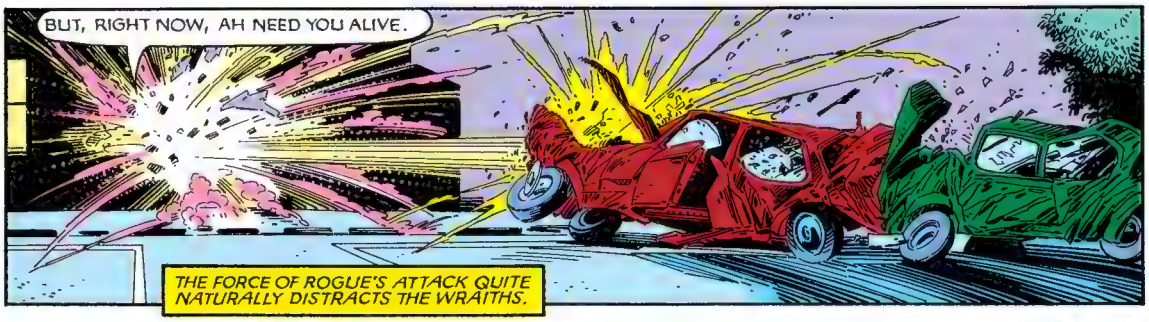

I THOUGHT THAT WAS WHAT I WANTED. I'M LEARNING DIFFERENTLY.
YOU'RE SHIVERING, ORORO.
I... AM COLD.
MY BODY AUTOMATICALLY COMPENSATED FOR THE ENVIRONMENT-- KEEPING ME WARM IN THE ARCTIC OR DELICIOUSLY COOL IN THE JUNGLE.
IT WAS SOMETHING I ALWAYS TOOK FOR GRANTED.
AS YOU SAY, I HAVE BECOME "JUST PLAIN FOLKS."
THE SOONER I BECOME USED TO THAT...
CALDECOTT COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI...
ENTRANCE
WELCOME BACK, Dr. COOPER. HOW WAS WASHINGTON?
LOUSY, PHIL. EVIDENTLY, STORM UNLEASHED SO MUCH ENERGY WHEN THE NEUTRALIZER HIT HER, SHE BURNED OUT THE MUTANT SCANNER THE AVENGERS GAVE US. CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I DOUBT FORGE'LL LOAN US HIS.
HE ANGRY?
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW. YOUR DAY ANY BETTER?
'FRAID NOT. I THINK WE'VE LOST ROGUE. THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY PLACES ALONG THE RIVER TO HIDE-- OUR NET'S SPREAD TOO THIN.
WHAT ABOUT THAT OTHER MUTIE--THE ONE CARTED OFF BY FORGE?
GYRICH SAID HE'D DEAL WITH HER.
Mr. TACT STRIKES AGAIN, FORGE'LL LOVE THAT!
IF THEY SLAUGHTER EACH OTHER...
... IT'LL BE FINE WITH ME.
G'NIGHT, PHIL.

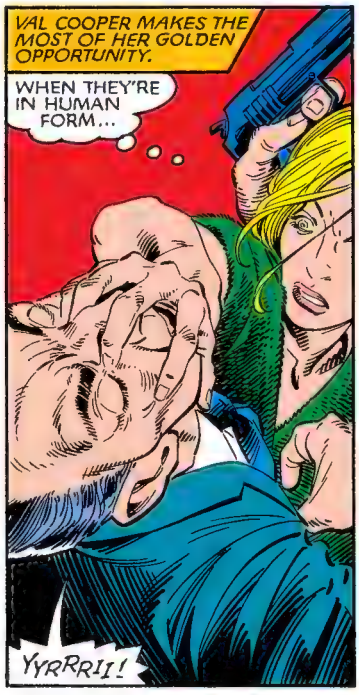

SEE YOU IN THE MORNING, DOC.
THE LADY DOES NOT LOOK GOOD.
WORD IS, FORGE PROTESTED TO THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF.
GYRICH'S ZAPPING THE WRONG PERSON BY MISTAKE...
... ONLY MADE MATTERS WORSE -- WHAT'S THAT?! THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING!
NOPE--LOT'S DESERTED.
GETTIN' JUMPY IN MY OLD AGE.
POOR VAL-- SHE SAW THIS ASSIGNMENT AS HER BIG CHANCE. INSTEAD, IT'LL PROBABLY FINISH HER CAREER.
TOO BAD. I LIKED HER.
SHE'S A GOOD BOSS. SHE DESERVES BETTER.
YAWWWN-- I HOPE MARTY'S STILL UP. I HATE EATING ALONE. BEEN AWAY FROM HOME-- AN' HER -- WAY TOO MUCH LATELY...
HUMAN!

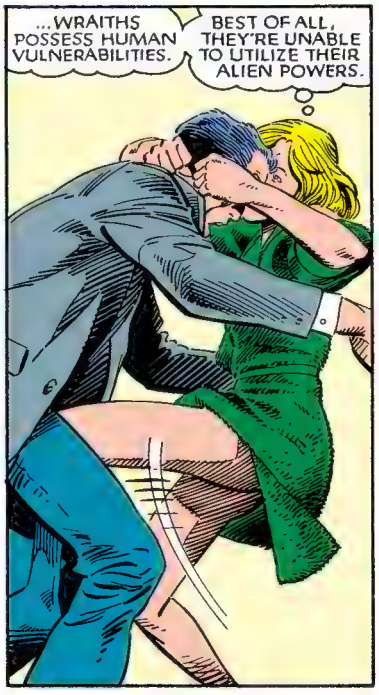
WHUA--?!!
AAAAAAAHHHHH
OUR SORCERY PREVENTED ANY FROM HEARING YOUR OUTCRY, PHILLIP ROSEN. AND THOSE WHO LEARN OF YOUR DEMISE WILL MEET A SIMILAR FATE.
YOUR HUMAN FORM AND MEMORIES ARE UTTERLY REPULSIVE TO ME, BUT BOTH WILL BE ENDURED UNTIL OUR MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED.
COME FORTH, SISTERS...
...THE FEMALE AWAITS.
NOKNOKNO
I'M COMING!
NOKN
NOKNOKNO
GIVE IT A REST, WILL YOU-- I'M COMING!
NOKN
FOR PETE'S SAKE!?!

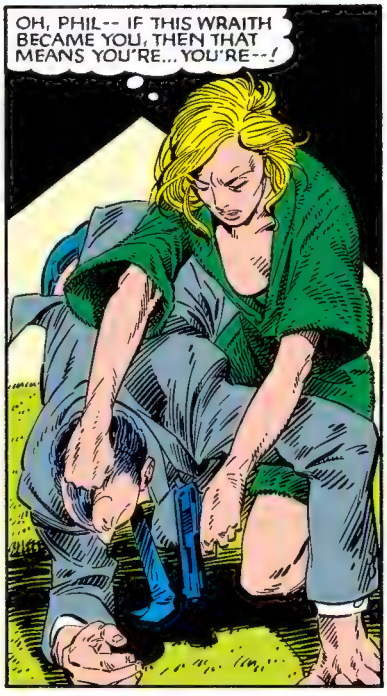

PHIL!
AH, SORRY, I, UHM...
...I WAS IN THE BATH.
ANYTHING WRONG?
WE MUST TALK, VAL.
IT'S URGENT.
SURE--COME ON IN.
MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, WHILE I THROW ON SOME CLOTHES.
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
HEY--!!
IN A MOMENT, YOU WILL BE BEYOND ALL EARTHLY CONCERNS.
WHAT'RE YOU TALK--GASP!?!
YOU'VE SHOWN SUCH INTEREST IN DIRE WRAITHS, VAL.
TONIGHT, YOU WILL BECOME ONE!

NO SHE WON'T, SUCKERS!
SHE'S MINE!
ANOTHER HUMAN!
WHO--?!?
SLAY IT--AT ONCE!
DON'T'CHA RECOGNIZE ME, DOC--AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE YOU'VE GONE TO, HUNTIN' ME DOWN LIKE A MAD DOG?!
AH'M ROGUE!!
CHUNT!
AN', TRUTH T' TELL, AH REALLY HATE DOIN' THIS. IF EVER ANYONE DESERVED BEIN' LEFT T' HER FATE, VAL DARLIN'--
--IT'S YOU!

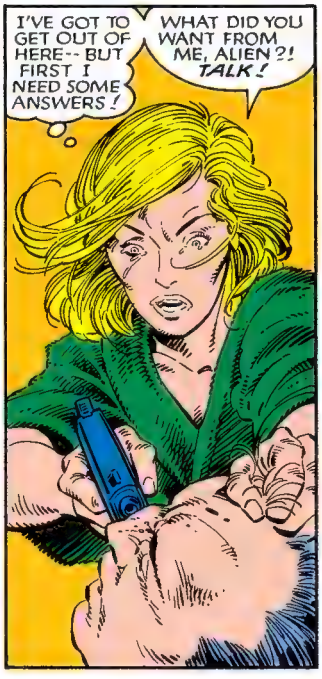

BUT, RIGHT NOW, AH NEED YOU ALIVE.
THE FORCE OF ROGUE'S ATTACK QUITE NATURALLY DISTRACTS THE WRAITHS.

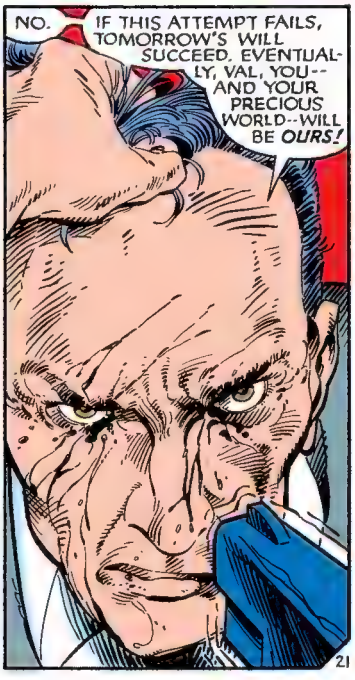

VAL COOPER MAKES THE MOST OF HER GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.
WHEN THEY'RE IN HUMAN FORM...
YYRRII!


...WRAITHS POSSESS HUMAN VULNERABILITIES.
BEST OF ALL, THEY'RE UNABLE TO UTILIZE THEIR ALIEN POWERS.


OH, PHIL-- IF THIS WRAITH BECAME YOU, THEN THAT MEANS YOU'RE... YOU'RE--!

AH THOUGHT AH'D SEEN UGLY CRITTERS IN MY TIME-- BUT YOU CLOWNS'RE IN A CLASS BY YOURSELF!
THAT WRAITH HASN'T A CHANCE--THEN IT'LL BE MY TURN.


I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE-- BUT FIRST I NEED SOME ANSWERS!
WHAT DID YOU WANT FROM ME, ALIEN?! TALK!

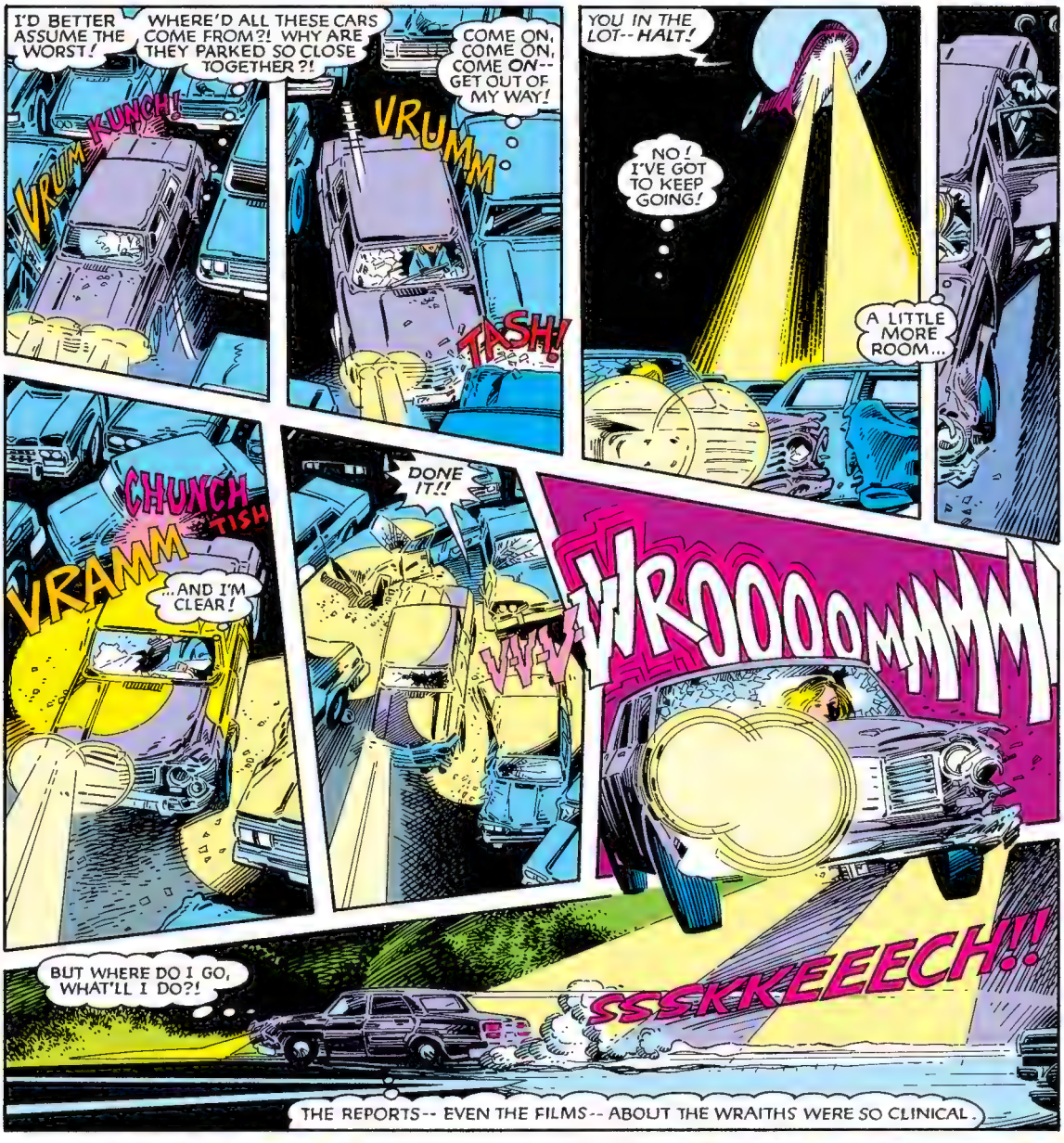

NO.
IF THIS ATTEMPT FAILS, TOMORROW'S WILL SUCCEED, EVENTUALLY, VAL, YOU-- AND YOUR PRECIOUS WORLD--WILL BE OURS!

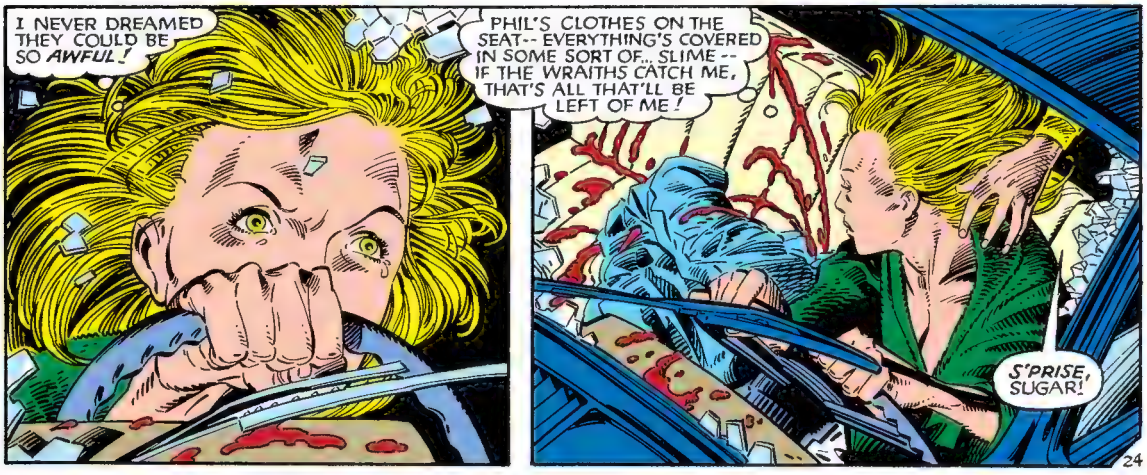
WHATEVER HAPPENS, WRAITH-- YOU WON'T BE THERE TO SEE IT!
BAM
I-- KILLED HIM!
I NEVER-- I DIDN'T THINK-- STOP IT, WOMAN! SAVE YOURSELF!
RUN!!
'FRAID AH'LL HAVE TO CUT THIS SHORT, YUCKO--
--BUT THE GUV'MENT LADY 'N' ME'VE GOT SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
KYCC
OOOMM!
YAAAAAA!
THAT SCREAM--?!!
HAS THE WRAITH KILLED ROGUE?! WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THERE?!?
YAAAAAAAAAAAAA

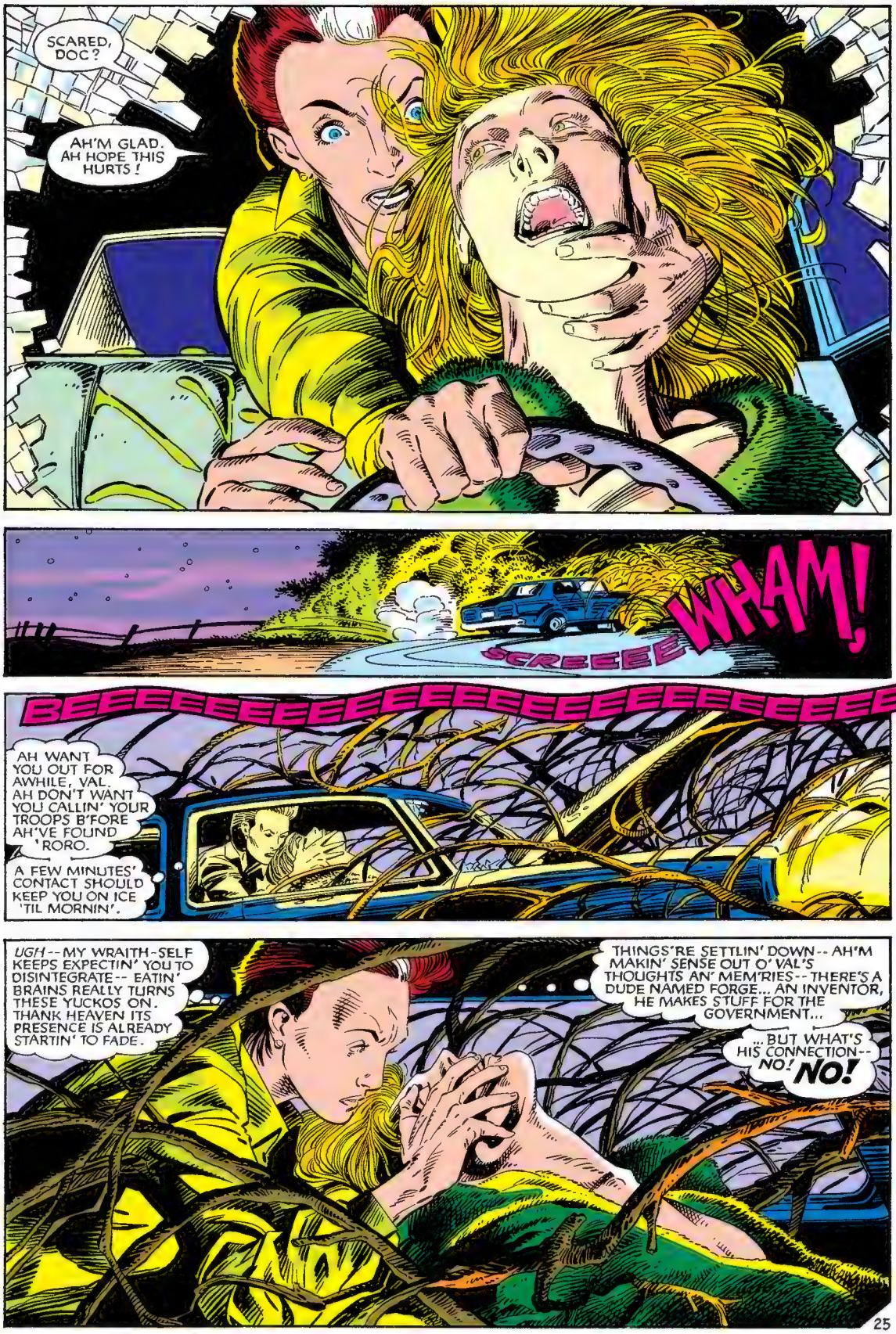
FOOL!
FORGOT--WASN'T WEARING COSTUME --NO GLOVES! WHEN OUR BARE FLESH TOUCHED--AH ABSORBED ITS ABILITIES ...MEM'RIES... IDENTITY!
MONSTER'S SO POWERFUL! TRYIN' T' TAKE OVER! MUST FIGHT BACK--HOLD ON... T' SELF!
CAUGH!
BUT WHICH SELF IS MINE?!
HUMANS--
--AH'M HUMAN!--

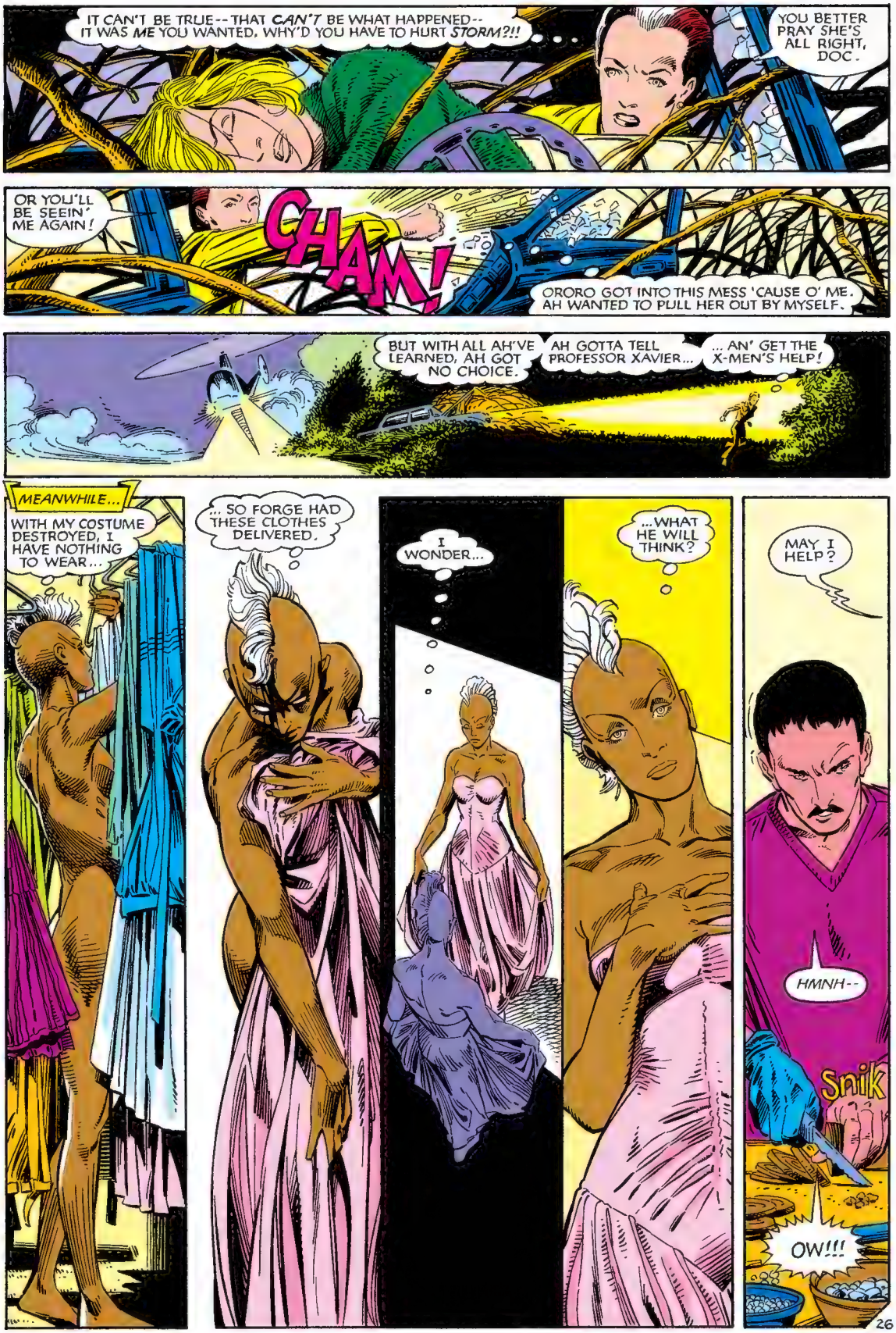
"-- LESS THAN ANIMALS, FIT ONLY FOR THE SLAUGHTER!"
ROGUE!
I'VE ESTABLISHED A MINDLINK, NIGHTCRAWLER! BUT HER THOUGHTS--SO ALIEN AND... VILE!
INSATIABLE HUNGER... LUST FOR DEATH... DESTRUCTION...
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM SO SHAKEN. AND IF THINGS ARE THIS BAD FOR HIM...
...OVER-WHELMING... PSYCHIC DEFENSES...
...HOW MUCH WORSE ARE THEY FOR ROGUE?!
IS HE SPEAKING OF ROGUE OR HIM-SELF?!
PROFESSOR--!?!
DRAW WHAT STRENGTH YOU NEED FROM ME, MEIN HERR! HELP ROGUE IF YOU CAN!
THE CO-ORDINATES, PROFESSOR?! CAN CEREBRO PINPOINT ROGUE'S LOCATION?!

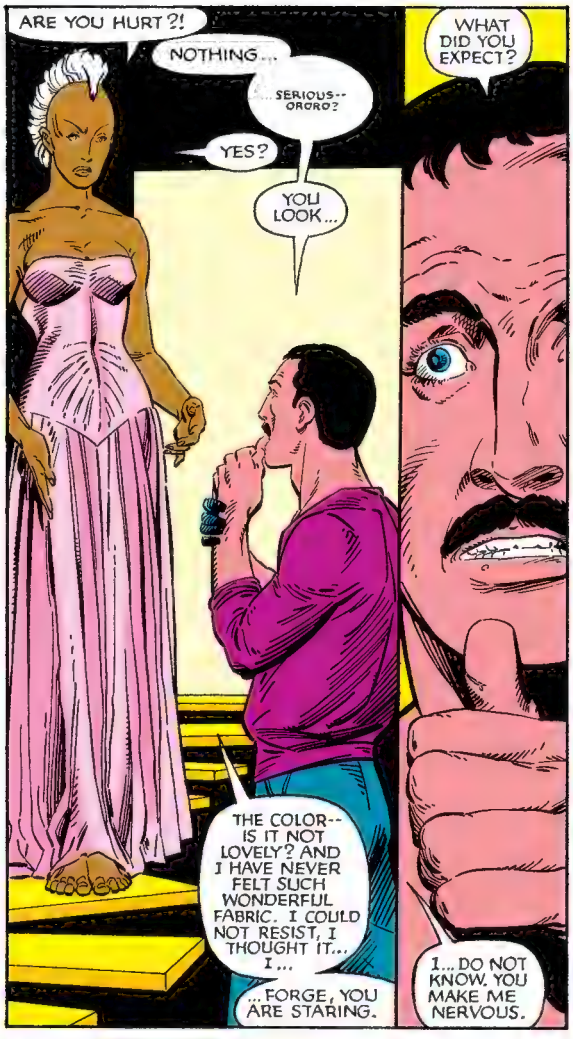
MEANWHILE...
WHAT A MESS! THIS MUST BE WHERE PHIL WAS AMBUSHED!
A CHOPPER--! BUT IS IT FRIEND OR FOE?!

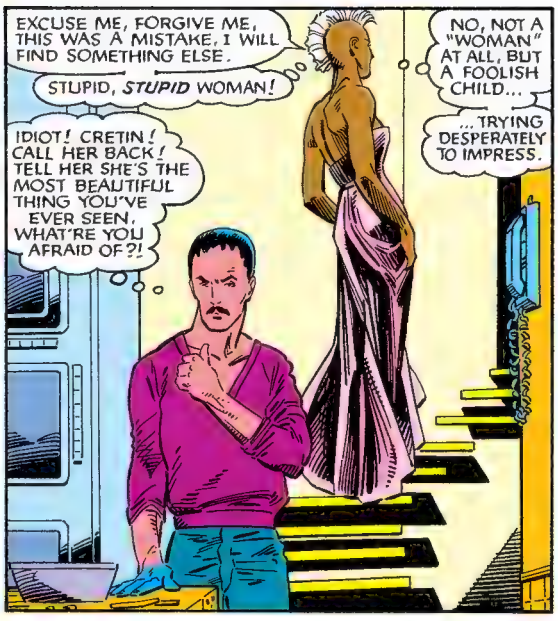

I'D BETTER ASSUME THE WORST!
WHERE'D ALL THESE CARS COME FROM?! WHY ARE THEY PARKED SO CLOSE TOGETHER?!
VRUM
KUNCH!
COME ON, COME ON, COME ON-- GET OUT OF MY WAY!
VRUMM
TASH!
YOU IN THE LOT-- HALT!
NO! I'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING!
A LITTLE MORE ROOM...
CHUNCH
TISH
VRAMM
...AND I'M CLEAR!
DONE IT!!
V-V-V
WROOOOMMMMM!
BUT WHERE DO I GO, WHAT'LL I DO?!
SSSKKEEECH!!
THE REPORTS-- EVEN THE FILMS-- ABOUT THE WRAITHS WERE SO CLINICAL.


I NEVER DREAMED THEY COULD BE SO AWFUL!
PHIL'S CLOTHES ON THE SEAT-- EVERYTHING'S COVERED IN SOME SORT OF... SLIME -- IF THE WRAITHS CATCH ME, THAT'S ALL THAT'LL BE LEFT OF ME!
S'PRISE, SUGAR!

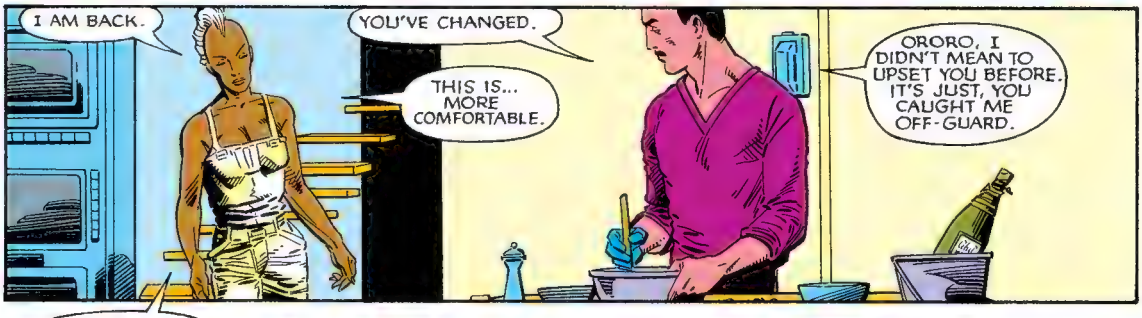

SCARED, DOC?
AH'M GLAD. AH HOPE THIS HURTS!
SCREEEE
WHAM!
BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
AH WANT YOU OUT FOR AWHILE, VAL. AH DON'T WANT YOU CALLIN' YOUR TROOPS B'FORE AH'VE FOUND 'RORO.
A FEW MINUTES' CONTACT SHOULD KEEP YOU ON ICE 'TIL MORNIN'.
UGH--MY WRAITH-SELF KEEPS EXPECTIN' YOU TO DISINTEGRATE-- EATIN' BRAINS REALLY TURNS THESE YUCKOS ON. THANK HEAVEN ITS PRESENCE IS ALREADY STARTIN' TO FADE.
THINGS'RE SETTLIN' DOWN-- AH'M MAKIN' SENSE OUT O' VAL'S THOUGHTS AN' MEM'RIES-- THERE'S A DUDE NAMED FORGE... AN INVENTOR, HE MAKES STUFF FOR THE GOVERNMENT...
...BUT WHAT'S HIS CONNECTION--
NO! NO!


IT CAN'T BE TRUE--THAT CAN'T BE WHAT HAPPENED--
IT WAS ME YOU WANTED, WHY'D YOU HAVE TO HURT STORM?!!
YOU BETTER PRAY SHE'S ALL RIGHT, DOC.
OR YOU'LL BE SEEIN' ME AGAIN!
CHAM!
ORORO GOT INTO THIS MESS 'CAUSE O' ME. AH WANTED TO PULL HER OUT BY MYSELF.
BUT WITH ALL AH'VE LEARNED, AH GOT NO CHOICE.
AH GOTTA TELL PROFESSOR XAVIER...
... AN' GET THE X-MEN'S HELP!
MEANWHILE...
WITH MY COSTUME DESTROYED, I HAVE NOTHING TO WEAR...
... SO FORGE HAD THESE CLOTHES DELIVERED.
I WONDER...
...WHAT HE WILL THINK?
MAY I HELP?
HMNH--
Snik
OW!!!

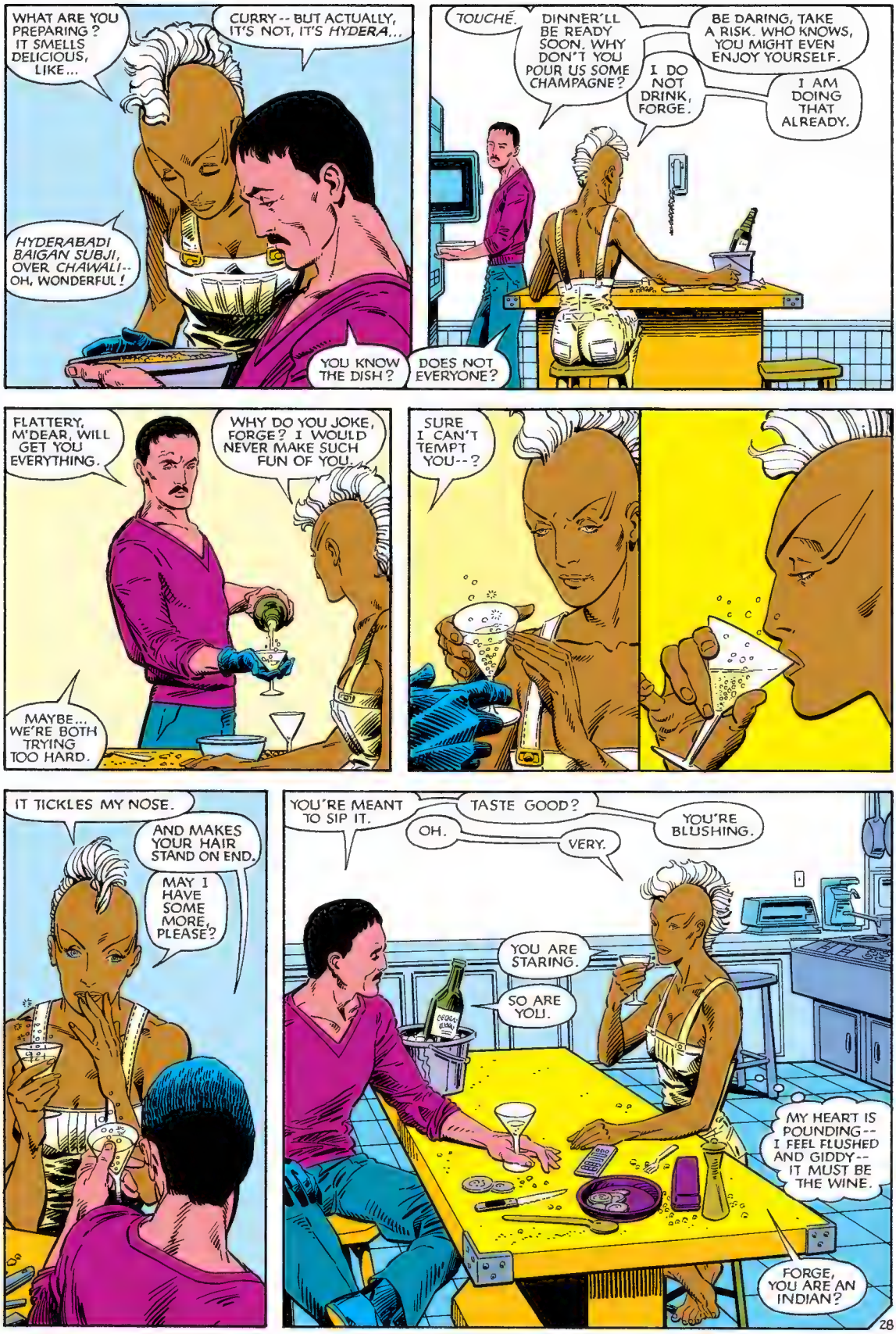

ARE YOU HURT?!
NOTHING...
...SERIOUS--ORORO?
YES?
YOU LOOK...
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
THE COLOR--IS IT NOT LOVELY? AND I HAVE NEVER FELT SUCH WONDERFUL FABRIC. I COULD NOT RESIST, I THOUGHT IT... I...
...FORGE, YOU ARE STARING.
I... DO NOT KNOW. YOU MAKE ME NERVOUS.

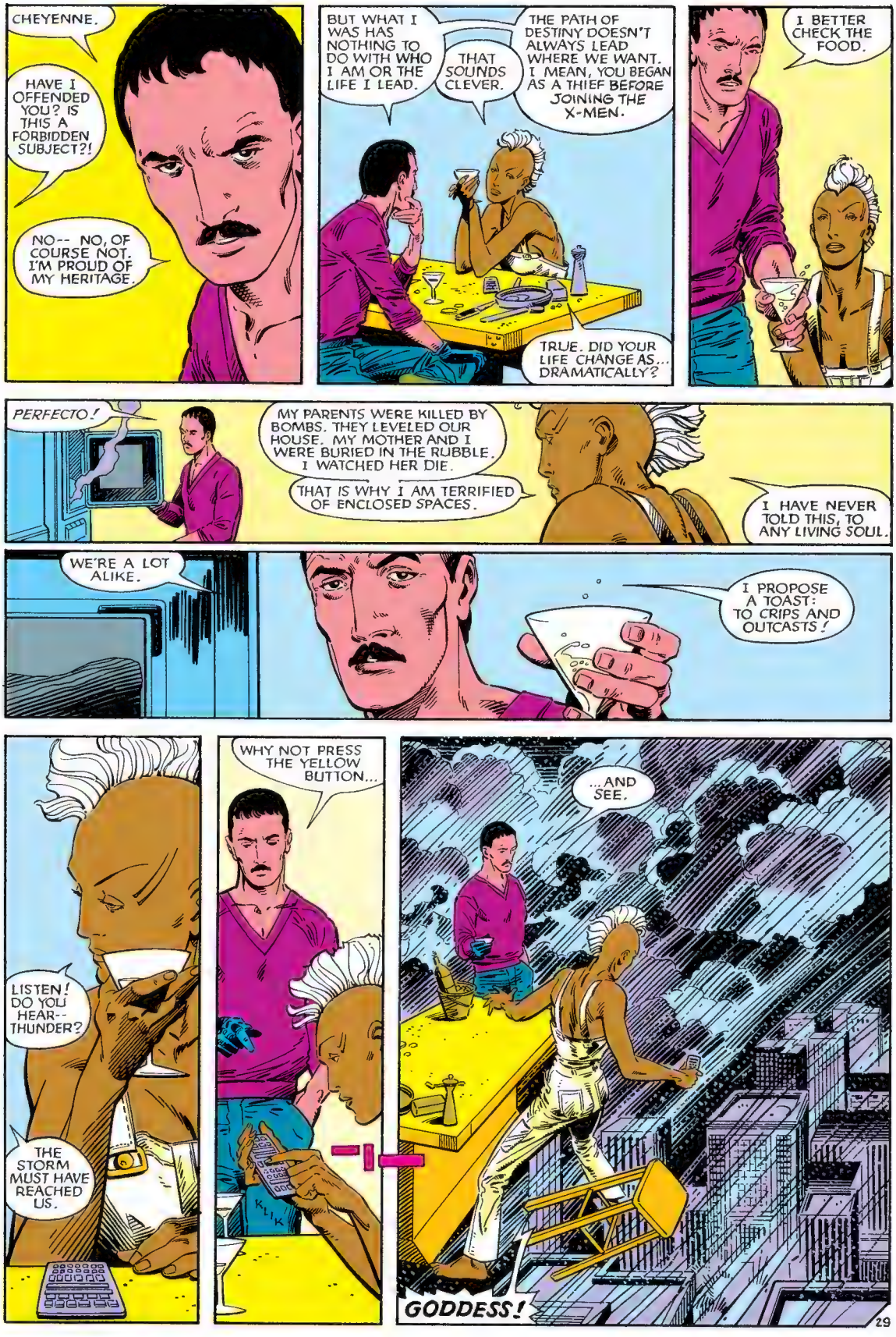

EXCUSE ME, FORGIVE ME, THIS WAS A MISTAKE. I WILL FIND SOMETHING ELSE.
STUPID, *STUPID* WOMAN!
IDIOT! CRETIN! CALL HER BACK! TELL HER SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING YOU'VE EVER SEEN. WHAT'RE YOU AFRAID OF?!
NO, NOT A "WOMAN" AT ALL, BUT A FOOLISH CHILD...
...TRYING DESPERATELY TO IMPRESS.

WHY DO I SO CRAVE HIS APPROVAL?
IT IS NOT LIKE ME. HOW MY BEHAVIOR MUST HAVE MADE HIM LAUGH.

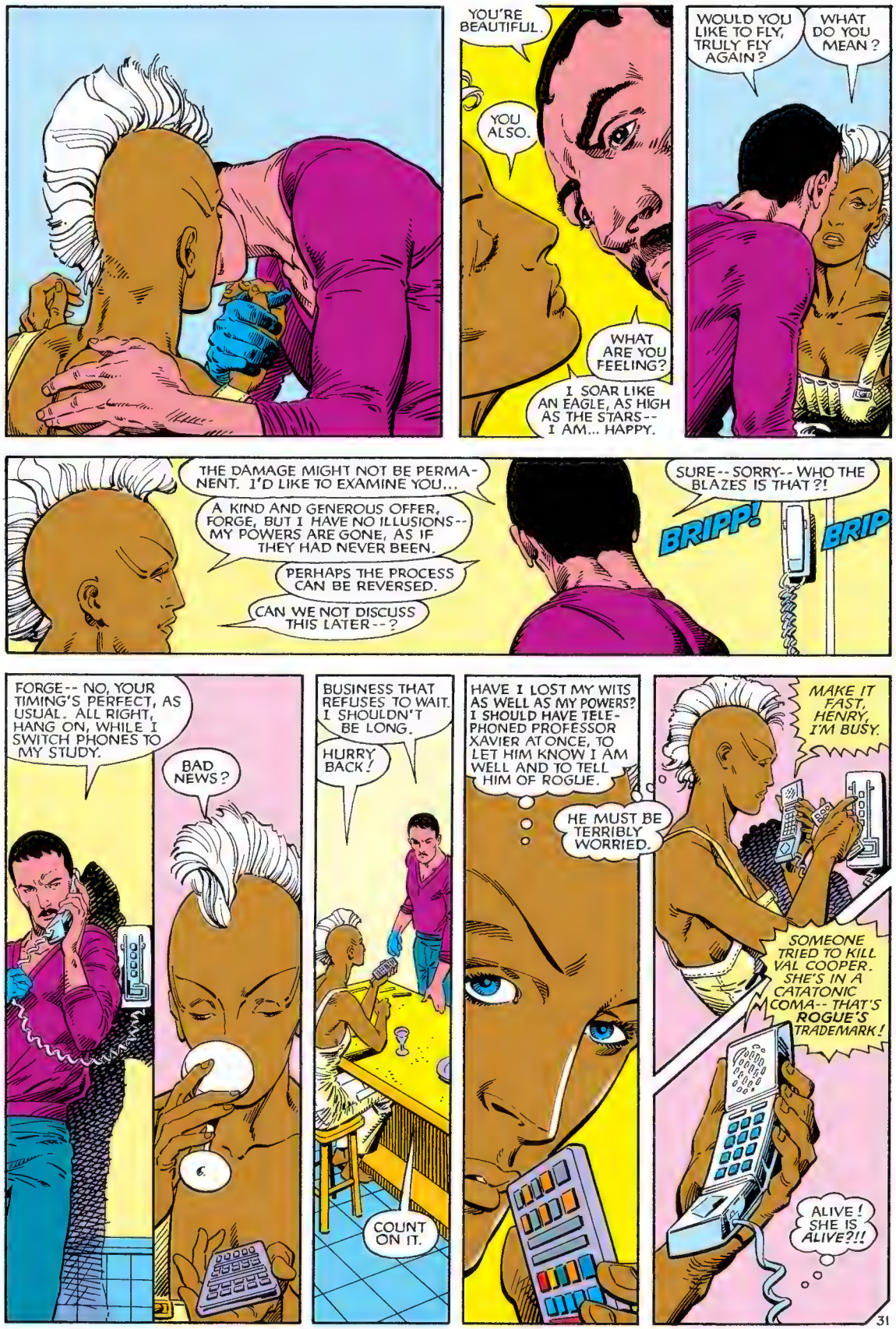

I AM BACK.
YOU'VE CHANGED.
THIS IS... MORE COMFORTABLE.
ORORO, I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU BEFORE. IT'S JUST, YOU CAUGHT ME OFF-GUARD.

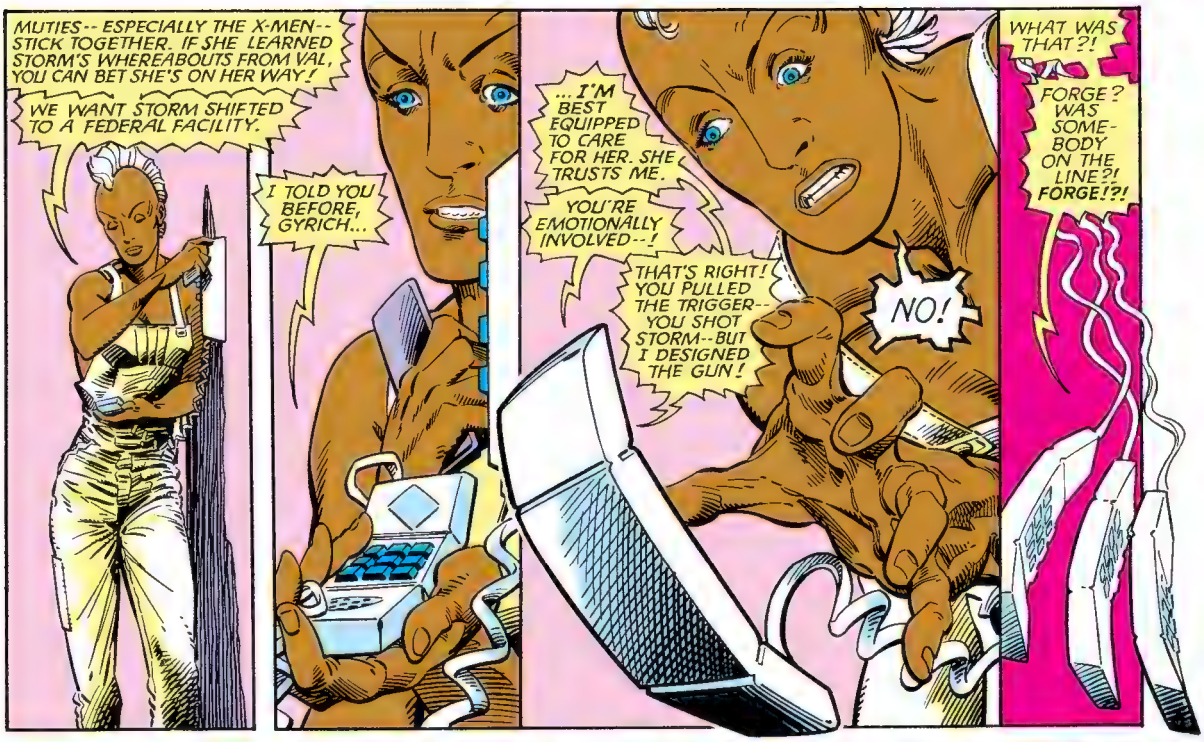
ARE YOU SO ASHAMED OF WHAT YOU THINK AND FEEL THAT YOU MUST HIDE THOSE THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS?
SOMETIMES.
I LIKE MY PRIVACY. THERE'S SAFETY IN SOLITUDE, EVEN IF OCCASIONALLY I OVERDO IT.
THEN, MY BEING HERE IS A THREAT? PERHAPS I SHOULD LEAVE?
STAY--PLEASE!
I WOULD LIKE TO.

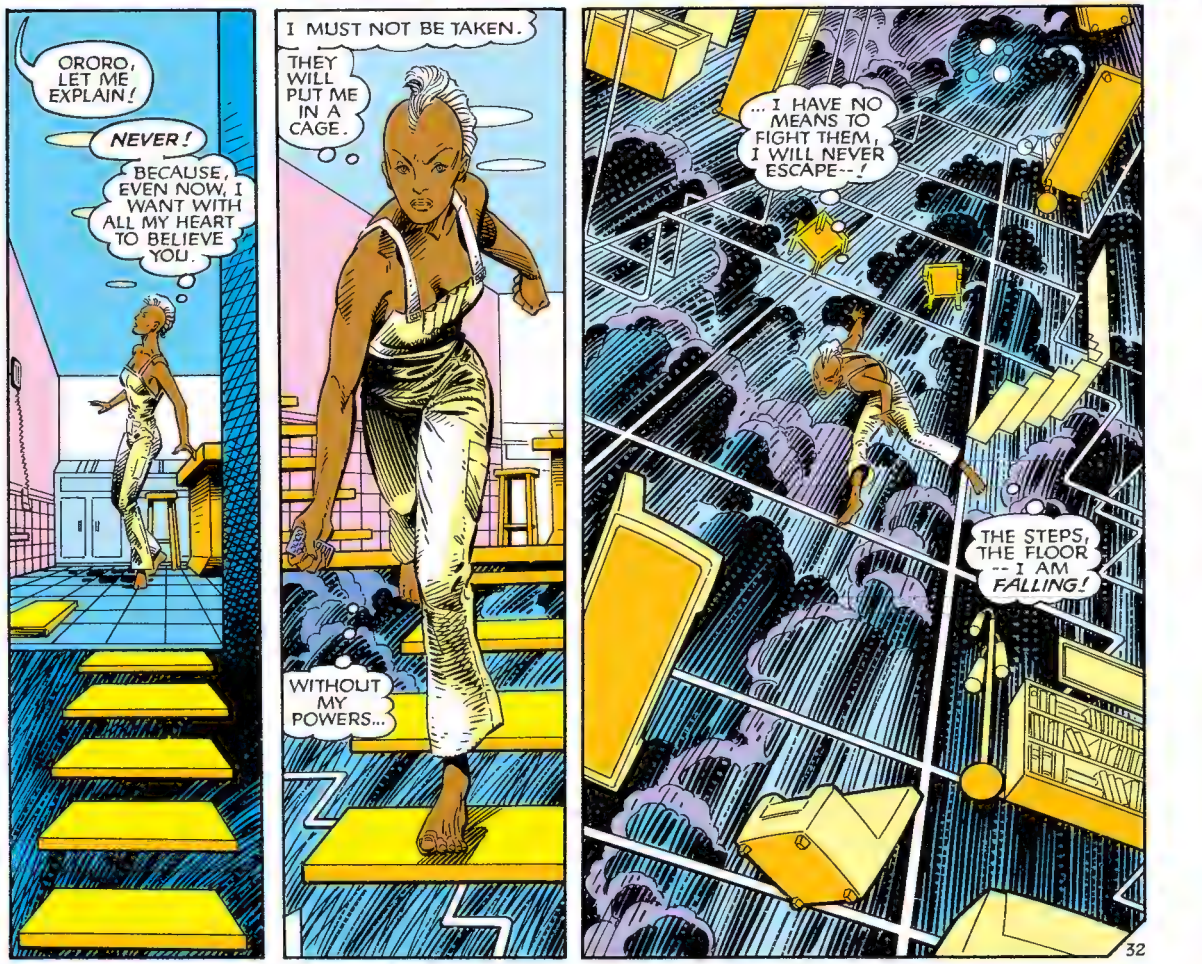

WHAT ARE YOU PREPARING? IT SMELLS DELICIOUS, LIKE...
CURRY -- BUT ACTUALLY, IT'S NOT, IT'S HYDERA...
HYDERABADI BAIGAN SUBJI, OVER CHAWALI -- OH, WONDERFUL!
YOU KNOW THE DISH?
DOES NOT EVERYONE?
TOUCHÉ.
DINNER'LL BE READY SOON. WHY DON'T YOU POUR US SOME CHAMPAGNE?
I DO NOT DRINK, FORGE.
BE DARING, TAKE A RISK. WHO KNOWS, YOU MIGHT EVEN ENJOY YOURSELF.
I AM DOING THAT ALREADY.
FLATTERY, M'DEAR, WILL GET YOU EVERYTHING.
WHY DO YOU JOKE, FORGE? I WOULD NEVER MAKE SUCH FUN OF YOU.
MAYBE... WE'RE BOTH TRYING TOO HARD.
SURE I CAN'T TEMPT YOU--?
IT TICKLES MY NOSE.
AND MAKES YOUR HAIR STAND ON END.
MAY I HAVE SOME MORE, PLEASE?
YOU'RE MEANT TO SIP IT.
TASTE GOOD?
OH.
VERY.
YOU'RE BLUSHING.
YOU ARE STARING.
SO ARE YOU.
MY HEART IS POUNDING -- I FEEL FLUSHED AND GIDDY -- IT MUST BE THE WINE.
FORGE, YOU ARE AN INDIAN?


CHEYENNE.
HAVE I OFFENDED YOU? IS THIS A FORBIDDEN SUBJECT?!
NO-- NO, OF COURSE NOT. I'M PROUD OF MY HERITAGE.
BUT WHAT I WAS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHO I AM OR THE LIFE I LEAD.
THAT SOUNDS CLEVER.
THE PATH OF DESTINY DOESN'T ALWAYS LEAD WHERE WE WANT. I MEAN, YOU BEGAN AS A THIEF BEFORE JOINING THE X-MEN.
TRUE. DID YOUR LIFE CHANGE AS... DRAMATICALLY?
I BETTER CHECK THE FOOD.
PERFECTO!
MY PARENTS WERE KILLED BY BOMBS. THEY LEVELED OUR HOUSE. MY MOTHER AND I WERE BURIED IN THE RUBBLE. I WATCHED HER DIE.
THAT IS WHY I AM TERRIFIED OF ENCLOSED SPACES.
I HAVE NEVER TOLD THIS, TO ANY LIVING SOUL.
WE'RE A LOT ALIKE.
I PROPOSE A TOAST: TO CRIPS AND OUTCASTS!
LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR-- THUNDER?
THE STORM MUST HAVE REACHED US.
WHY NOT PRESS THE YELLOW BUTTON...
KLIK
...AND SEE.
GODDESS!

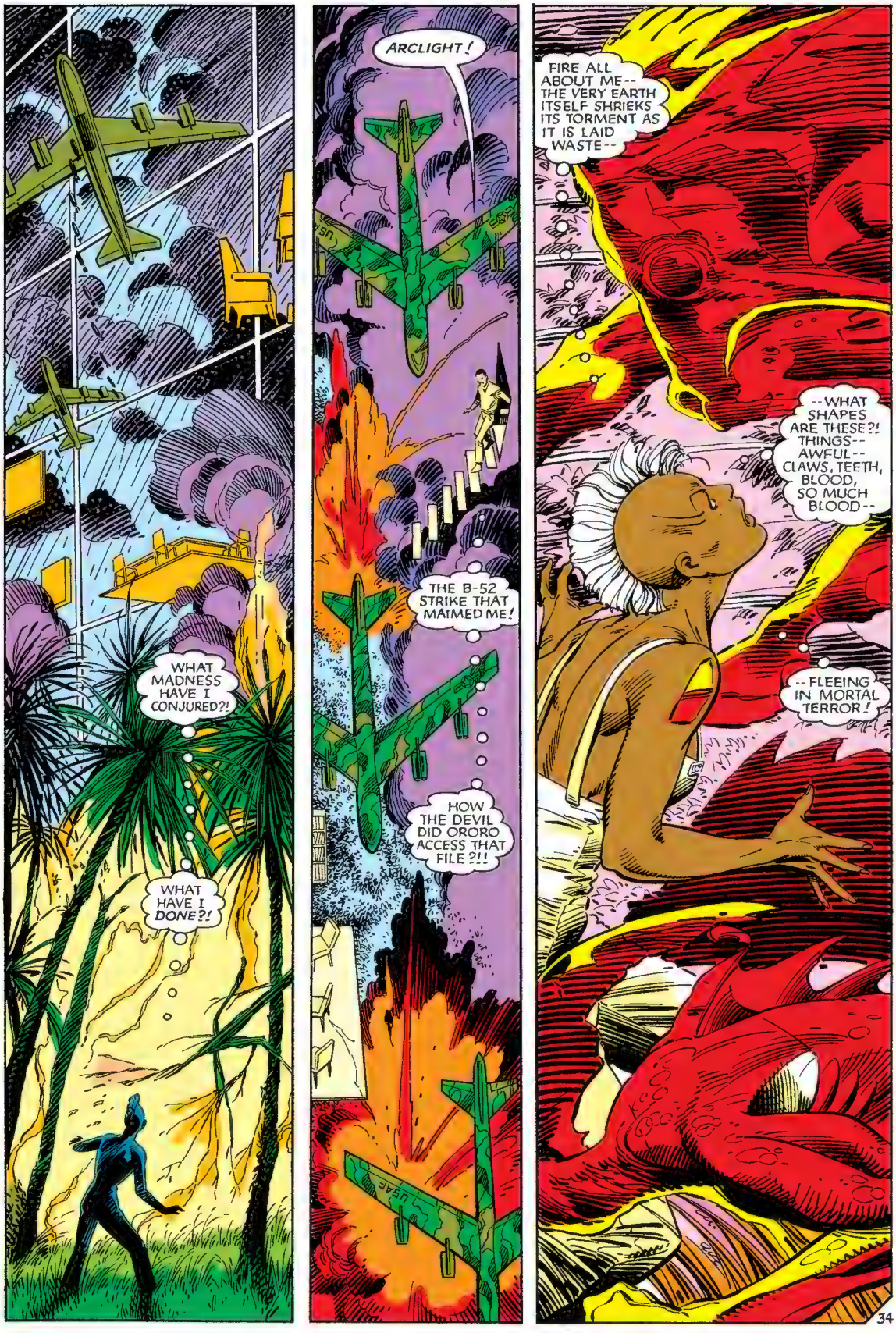
TAKE IT AWAY! MAKE IT GO AWAY! MAKE IT STOP!!
ORORO, GIVE ME THE CONTROL MODULE! OPEN YOUR HAND-- LET GO!
BDIP
IT'S DONE. THE STORM IS GONE. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
I FELT SO SMALL AND... INSIGNIFICANT... IN THE FACE OF THE STORM'S FURY-- OH, FORGE, I WAS SO AFRAID!
THIS'LL PASS, LOVE, YOU'LL COPE.
THANK YOU, OF LATE-- EVEN BEFORE I LOST MY POWERS--
-- I HAVE BEEN LIVING ON THE RAW EDGE OF MY EMOTIONS... FEELING... REACTING... TO EVERY-THING AS INTENSELY AS CAN BE.
THE FIRST LESSON I LEARNED-- AND A VERY HARSH ONE IT WAS, TOO--
--WAS THAT MY ELEMENTAL ABILITIES WERE BOUND UP WITH MY EMOTIONS. THE GREATER MY FEELINGS, THE MORE EXTREME THE ATMOSPHERIC RESPONSE.
TO PROTECT MYSELF, AND THOSE AROUND ME, I CULTIVATED AN ABSOLUTE SERENITY OF MIND AND BODY, SO MUCH THAT I LOST VIRTUALLY ALL AWARENESS OF MY-SELF AS A WOMAN.
A FEW MONTHS AGO, I CAST AWAY THOSE RESTRAINTS. I COULD NO LONGER ENDURE MY SELF-ENFORCED SPIRITUAL CELIBACY...
... SO I REBELLED.
I CUT MY HAIR, CHANGED MY CLOTHES-- LIKE YOU, I DENIED AS COMPLETELY AS I COULD MY OLD WORLD AND SELF AND BELIEFS.
NOW-- WHAT IRONY-- THE PROBLEM NO LONGER EXISTS. I NEED NOT FEAR MY FEELINGS, FOR THE ONLY PERSON AFFECTED -- THE ONLY ONE AT RISK--
--WILL BE ME.
NOT QUITE.

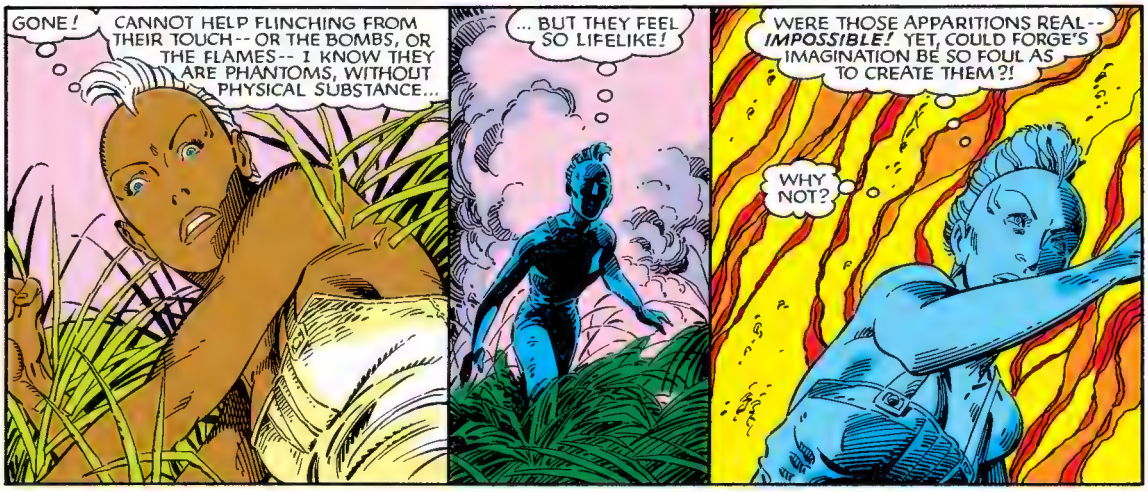

YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL.
YOU ALSO.
WHAT ARE YOU FEELING?
I SOAR LIKE AN EAGLE, AS HIGH AS THE STARS-- I AM... HAPPY.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO FLY, TRULY FLY AGAIN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THE DAMAGE MIGHT NOT BE PERMANENT. I'D LIKE TO EXAMINE YOU...
A KIND AND GENEROUS OFFER, FORGE, BUT I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS-- MY POWERS ARE GONE, AS IF THEY HAD NEVER BEEN.
PERHAPS THE PROCESS CAN BE REVERSED.
CAN WE NOT DISCUSS THIS LATER--?
SURE-- SORRY-- WHO THE BLAZES IS THAT?!
BRIPP!
BRIP
FORGE-- NO, YOUR TIMING'S PERFECT, AS USUAL. ALL RIGHT, HANG ON, WHILE I SWITCH PHONES TO MY STUDY.
BAD NEWS?
BUSINESS THAT REFUSES TO WAIT. I SHOULDN'T BE LONG.
HURRY BACK!
COUNT ON IT.
HAVE I LOST MY WITS AS WELL AS MY POWERS? I SHOULD HAVE TELEPHONED PROFESSOR XAVIER AT ONCE, TO LET HIM KNOW I AM WELL AND TO TELL HIM OF ROGUE.
HE MUST BE TERRIBLY WORRIED.
MAKE IT FAST, HENRY, I'M BUSY.
SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL VAL COOPER. SHE'S IN A CATATONIC COMA-- THAT'S ROGUE'S TRADEMARK!
ALIVE! SHE IS ALIVE?!!

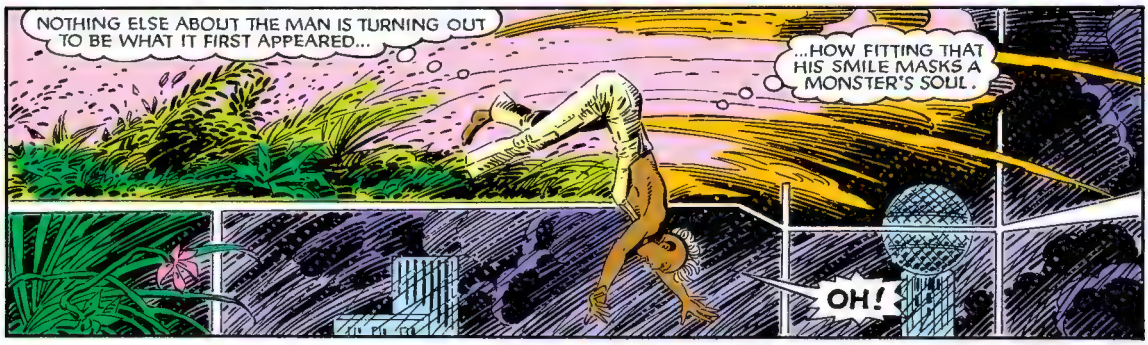

MUTIES-- ESPECIALLY THE X-MEN-- STICK TOGETHER. IF SHE LEARNED STORM'S WHEREABOUTS FROM VAL, YOU CAN BET SHE'S ON HER WAY!
WE WANT STORM SHIFTED TO A FEDERAL FACILITY.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, GYRICH...
...I'M BEST EQUIPPED TO CARE FOR HER. SHE TRUSTS ME.
YOU'RE EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED--!
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU PULLED THE TRIGGER-- YOU SHOT STORM--BUT I DESIGNED THE GUN!
NO!
WHAT WAS THAT?!
FORGE? WAS SOMEBODY ON THE LINE?! FORGE!?!

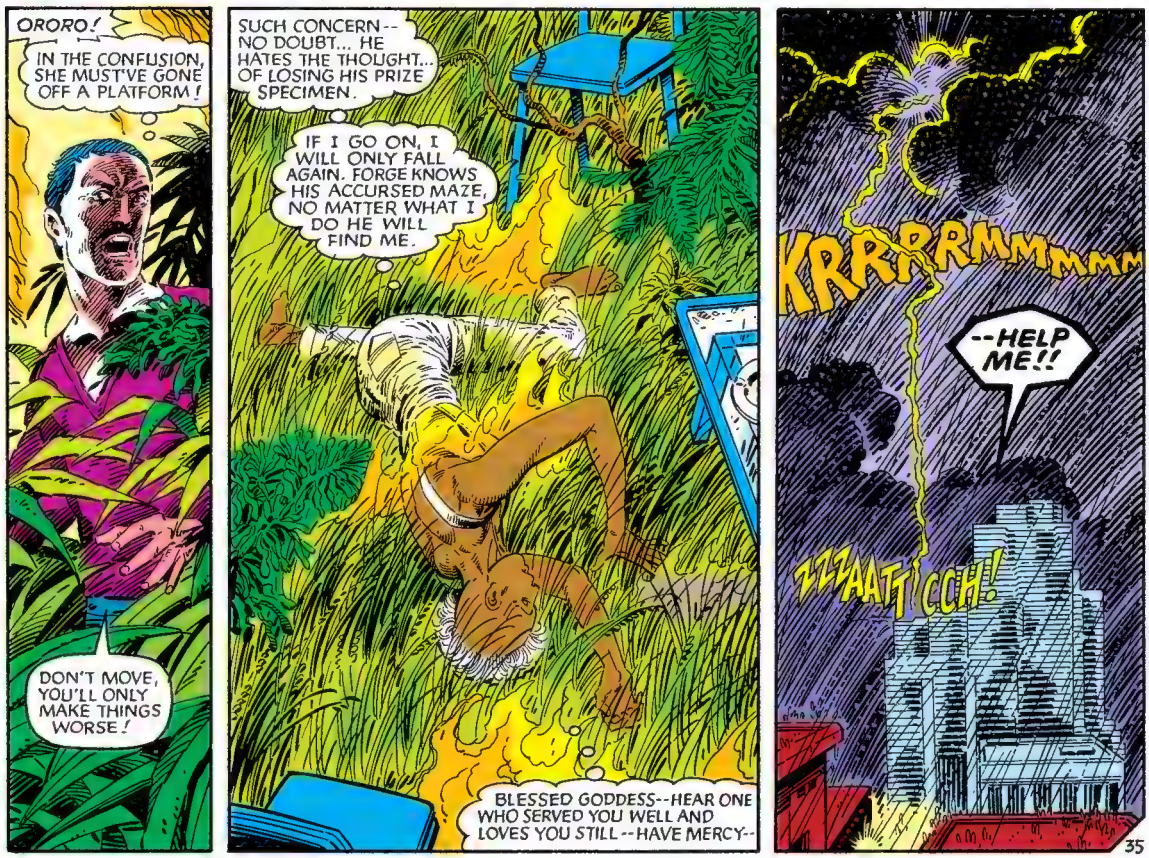

ORORO, LET ME EXPLAIN!
NEVER!
BECAUSE, EVEN NOW, I WANT WITH ALL MY HEART TO BELIEVE YOU.
I MUST NOT BE TAKEN.
THEY WILL PUT ME IN A CAGE.
WITHOUT MY POWERS...
...I HAVE NO MEANS TO FIGHT THEM, I WILL NEVER ESCAPE--!
THE STEPS, THE FLOOR --I AM FALLING!

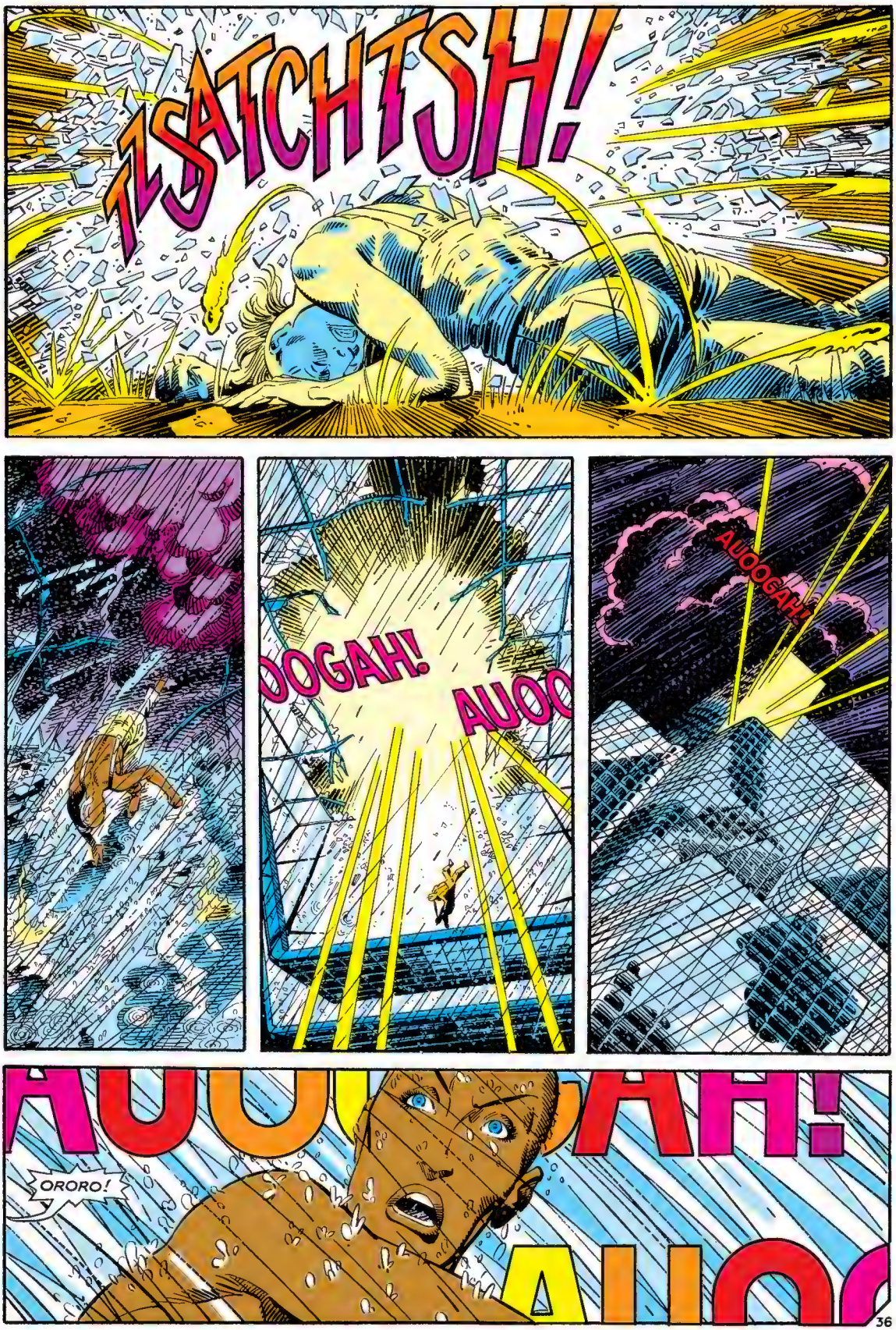
WHOWLFF!
FORGE-- DID THIS DELIBERATELY, TO TRAP ME -- HE MADE ALL THE PLATFORMS AND STAIRS VANISH!
WRENCHED MY SHOULDER -- HURTS--
--BUT I CAN STILL USE IT.
FOOTSTEPS!
IF HE CALLS AGAIN...
...I MUST NOT ANSWER.
THAT WILL TELL HIM WHERE I AM. AT LEAST, WITH THE LIGHTS OUT, HE CANNOT SEE ME EASILY.
THE ELEVATOR IS ON THE PENTHOUSE'S MAIN LEVEL-- BUT HOW DO I FIND MY WAY DOWN WITHOUT BREAKING MY NECK?!
HIS CONTROL MODULE. IF I CAN--
BDITBLIP
YYIIII!!

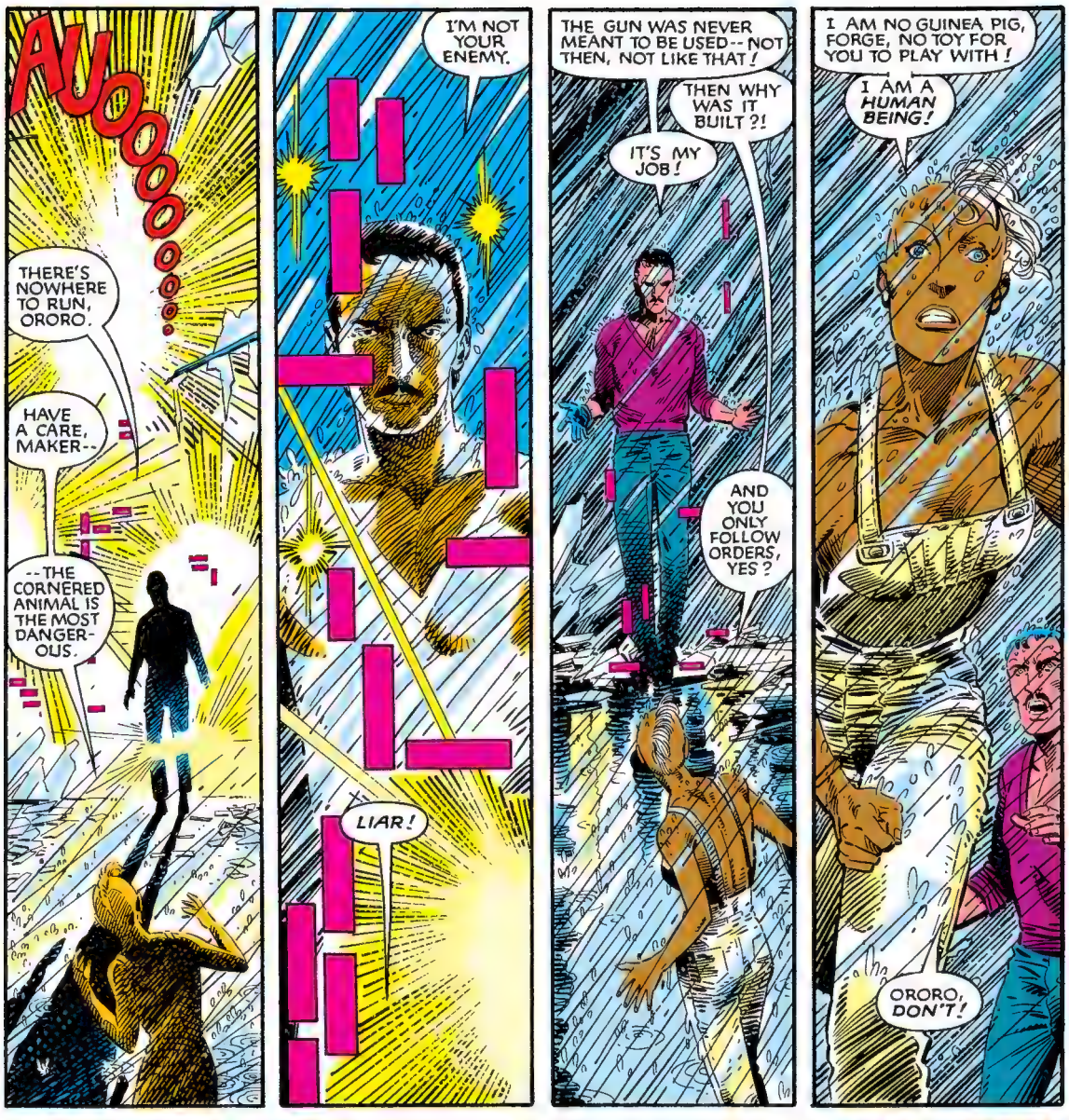

WHAT MADNESS HAVE I CONJURED?!
WHAT HAVE I DONE?!
ARCLIGHT!
THE B-52 STRIKE THAT MAIMED ME!
HOW THE DEVIL DID ORORO ACCESS THAT FILE?!!
FIRE ALL ABOUT ME-- THE VERY EARTH ITSELF SHRIEKS ITS TORMENT AS IT IS LAID WASTE--
--WHAT SHAPES ARE THESE?! THINGS-- AWFUL-- CLAWS, TEETH, BLOOD, SO MUCH BLOOD--
--FLEEING IN MORTAL TERROR!

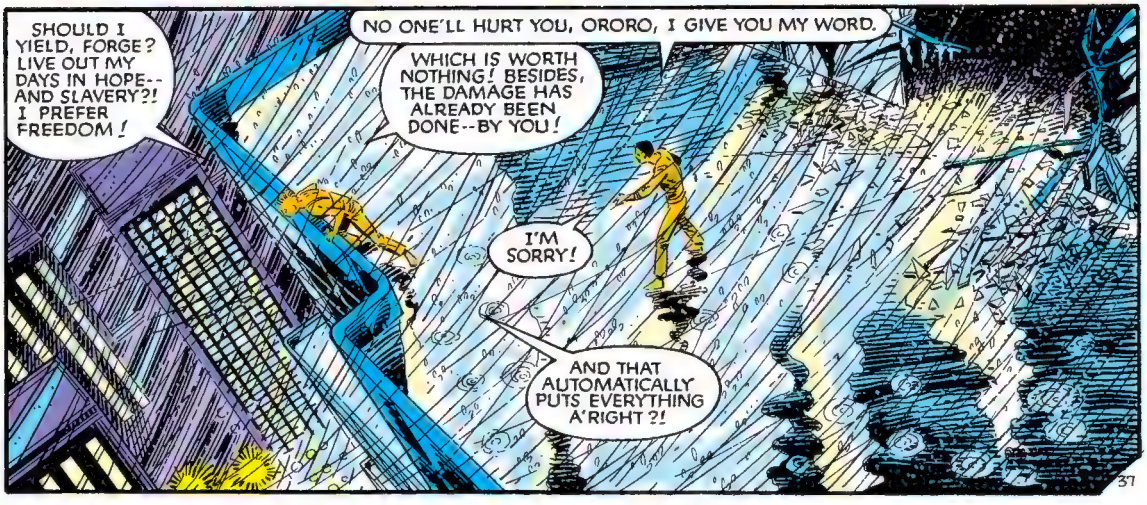

GONE!
CANNOT HELP FLINCHING FROM THEIR TOUCH-- OR THE BOMBS, OR THE FLAMES-- I KNOW THEY ARE PHANTOMS, WITHOUT PHYSICAL SUBSTANCE...
... BUT THEY FEEL SO LIFELIKE!
WERE THOSE APPARITIONS REAL-- IMPOSSIBLE! YET, COULD FORGE'S IMAGINATION BE SO FOUL AS TO CREATE THEM?!
WHY NOT?

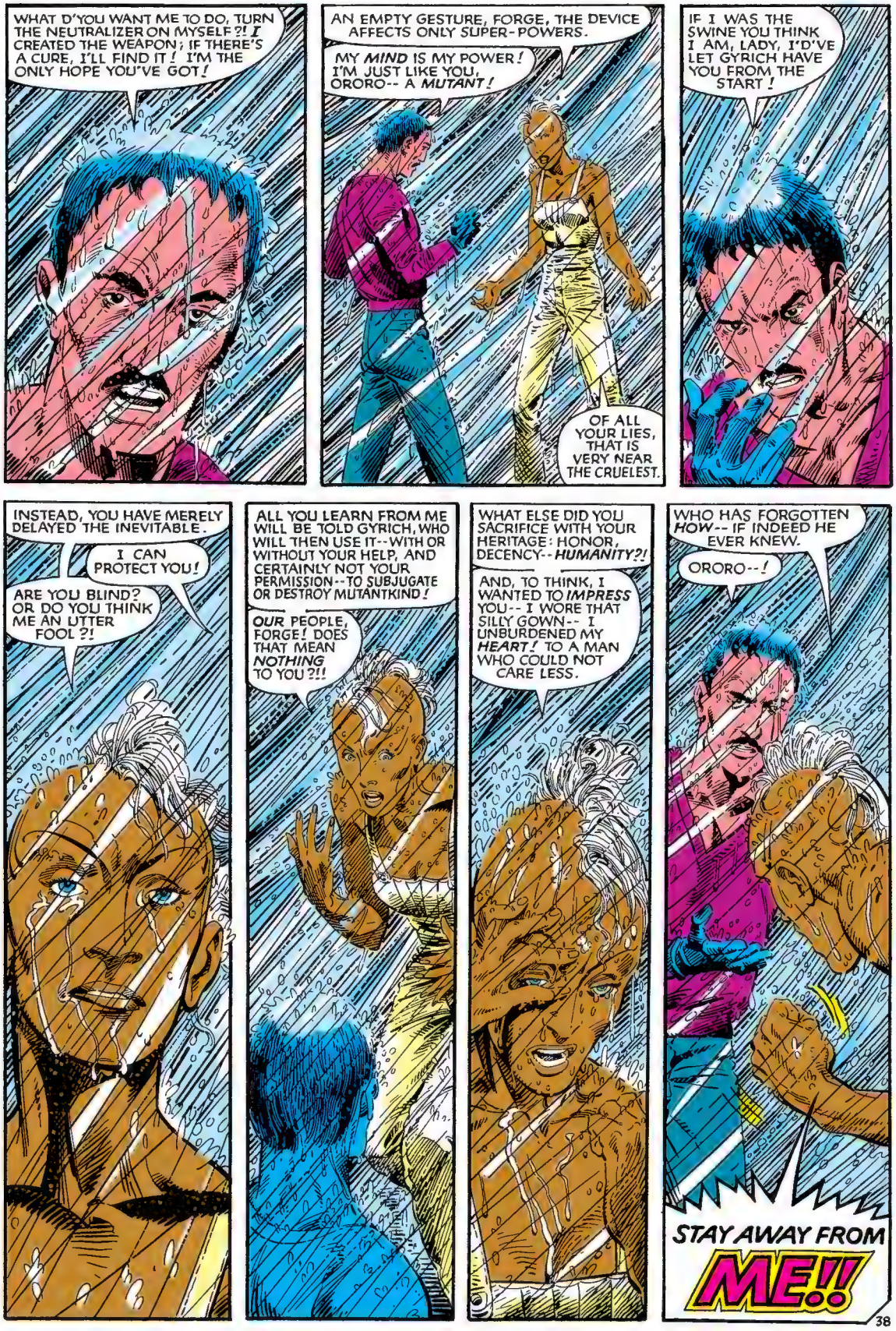

NOTHING ELSE ABOUT THE MAN IS TURNING OUT TO BE WHAT IT FIRST APPEARED...
...HOW FITTING THAT HIS SMILE MASKS A MONSTER'S SOUL.
OH!

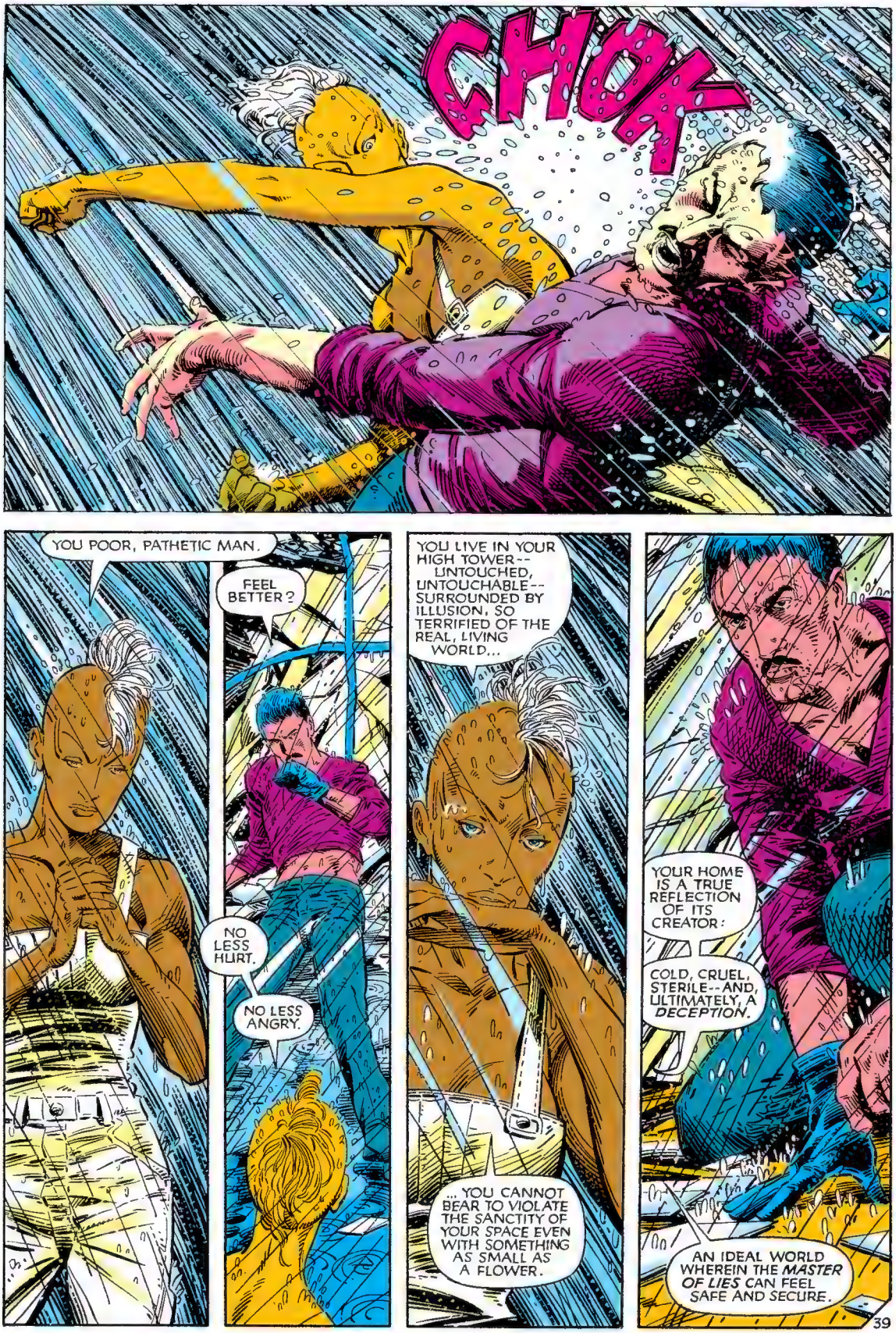

ORORO!
IN THE CONFUSION, SHE MUST'VE GONE OFF A PLATFORM!
DON'T MOVE, YOU'LL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE!
SUCH CONCERN-- NO DOUBT... HE HATES THE THOUGHT... OF LOSING HIS PRIZE SPECIMEN.
IF I GO ON, I WILL ONLY FALL AGAIN. FORGE KNOWS HIS ACCURSED MAZE, NO MATTER WHAT I DO HE WILL FIND ME.
BLESSED GODDESS--HEAR ONE WHO SERVED YOU WELL AND LOVES YOU STILL--HAVE MERCY--
KRRRRRMMMMMM
--HELP ME!!
ZZZAATTCCH!

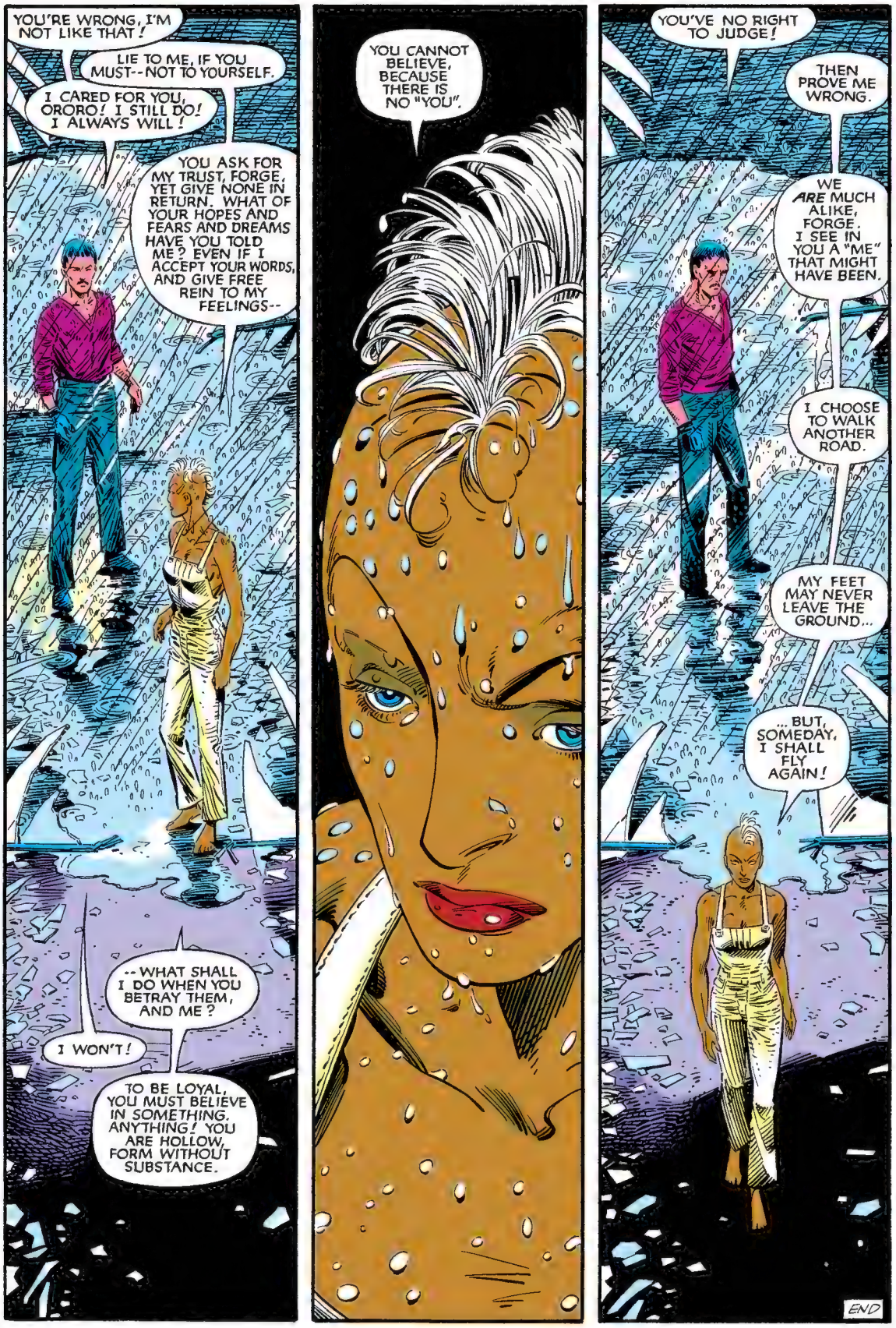

TZSATCHTSH!
OOGAH!
AUOO
AUOOGAH!
AUOOGAH!
ORORO!


AUOOOO
THERE'S NOWHERE TO RUN, ORORO.
HAVE A CARE, MAKER--
--THE CORNERED ANIMAL IS THE MOST DANGER-OUS.
I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY.
LIAR!
THE GUN WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE USED-- NOT THEN, NOT LIKE THAT!
THEN WHY WAS IT BUILT?!
IT'S MY JOB!
AND YOU ONLY FOLLOW ORDERS, YES?
I AM NO GUINEA PIG, FORGE, NO TOY FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH!
I AM A HUMAN BEING!
ORORO, DON'T!


SHOULD I YIELD, FORGE? LIVE OUT MY DAYS IN HOPE-- AND SLAVERY?! I PREFER FREEDOM!
NO ONE'LL HURT YOU, ORORO, I GIVE YOU MY WORD.
WHICH IS WORTH NOTHING! BESIDES, THE DAMAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE--BY YOU!
I'M SORRY!
AND THAT AUTOMATICALLY PUTS EVERYTHING A'RIGHT?!


WHAT D'YOU WANT ME TO DO, TURN THE NEUTRALIZER ON MYSELF?! I CREATED THE WEAPON; IF THERE'S A CURE, I'LL FIND IT! I'M THE ONLY HOPE YOU'VE GOT!
AN EMPTY GESTURE, FORGE, THE DEVICE AFFECTS ONLY SUPER-POWERS.
MY MIND IS MY POWER! I'M JUST LIKE YOU, ORORO-- A MUTANT!
OF ALL YOUR LIES, THAT IS VERY NEAR THE CRUELEST.
IF I WAS THE SWINE YOU THINK I AM, LADY, I'D'VE LET GYRICH HAVE YOU FROM THE START!
INSTEAD, YOU HAVE MERELY DELAYED THE INEVITABLE.
I CAN PROTECT YOU!
ARE YOU BLIND? OR DO YOU THINK ME AN UTTER FOOL?!
ALL YOU LEARN FROM ME WILL BE TOLD GYRICH, WHO WILL THEN USE IT--WITH OR WITHOUT YOUR HELP, AND CERTAINLY NOT YOUR PERMISSION--TO SUBJUGATE OR DESTROY MUTANTKIND!
OUR PEOPLE, FORGE! DOES THAT MEAN NOTHING TO YOU?!!
WHAT ELSE DID YOU SACRIFICE WITH YOUR HERITAGE: HONOR, DECENCY--HUMANITY?!
AND, TO THINK, I WANTED TO IMPRESS YOU-- I WORE THAT SILLY GOWN-- I UNBURDENED MY HEART! TO A MAN WHO COULD NOT CARE LESS.
WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HOW-- IF INDEED HE EVER KNEW.
ORORO--!
STAY AWAY FROM ME!!


CHOK
YOU POOR, PATHETIC MAN.
FEEL BETTER?
NO LESS HURT.
NO LESS ANGRY.
YOU LIVE IN YOUR HIGH TOWER-- UNTOUCHED, UNTOUCHABLE-- SURROUNDED BY ILLUSION, SO TERRIFIED OF THE REAL, LIVING WORLD...
...YOU CANNOT BEAR TO VIOLATE THE SANCTITY OF YOUR SPACE EVEN WITH SOMETHING AS SMALL AS A FLOWER.
YOUR HOME IS A TRUE REFLECTION OF ITS CREATOR:
COLD, CRUEL, STERILE-- AND, ULTIMATELY, A *DECEPTION*.
AN IDEAL WORLD WHEREIN THE *MASTER OF LIES* CAN FEEL SAFE AND SECURE.


YOU'RE WRONG, I'M NOT LIKE THAT!
LIE TO ME, IF YOU MUST--NOT TO YOURSELF.
I CARED FOR YOU, ORORO! I STILL DO! I ALWAYS WILL!
YOU ASK FOR MY TRUST, FORGE, YET GIVE NONE IN RETURN. WHAT OF YOUR HOPES AND FEARS AND DREAMS HAVE YOU TOLD ME? EVEN IF I ACCEPT YOUR WORDS, AND GIVE FREE REIN TO MY FEELINGS--
--WHAT SHALL I DO WHEN YOU BETRAY THEM, AND ME?
I WON'T!
TO BE LOYAL, YOU MUST BELIEVE IN SOMETHING. ANYTHING! YOU ARE HOLLOW, FORM WITHOUT SUBSTANCE.
YOU CANNOT BELIEVE, BECAUSE THERE IS NO "YOU".
YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE!
THEN PROVE ME WRONG.
WE ARE MUCH ALIKE, FORGE. I SEE IN YOU A "ME" THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
I CHOOSE TO WALK ANOTHER ROAD.
MY FEET MAY NEVER LEAVE THE GROUND...
...BUT, SOMEDAY, I SHALL FLY AGAIN!
END

MARVEL
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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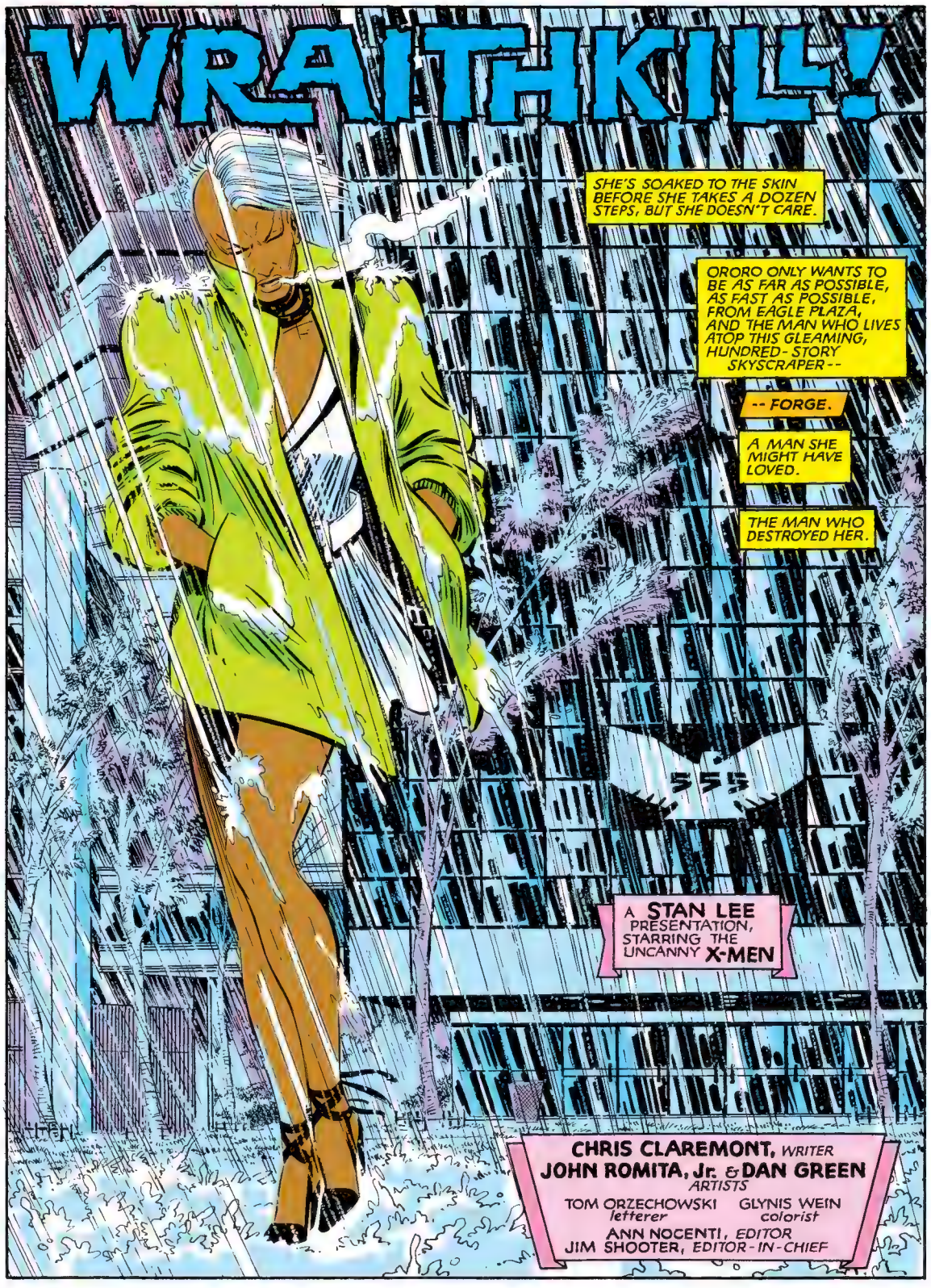
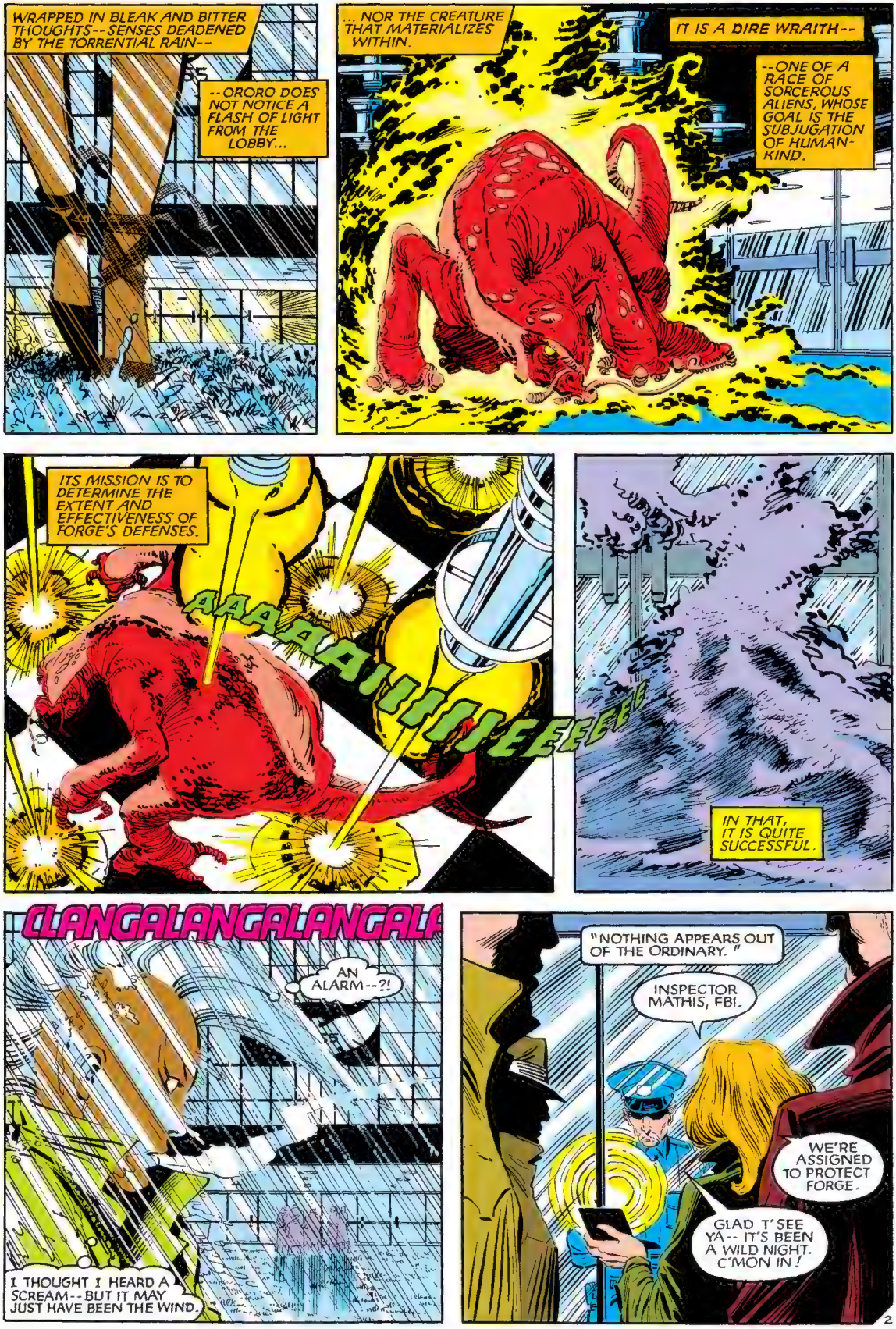
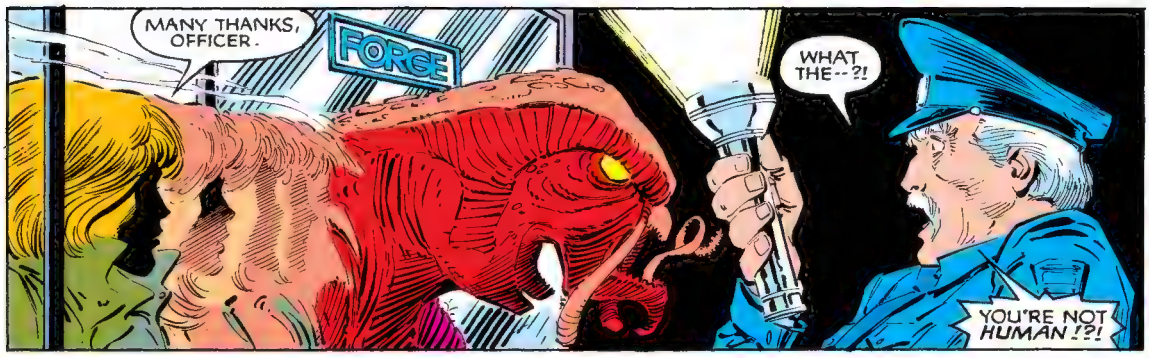
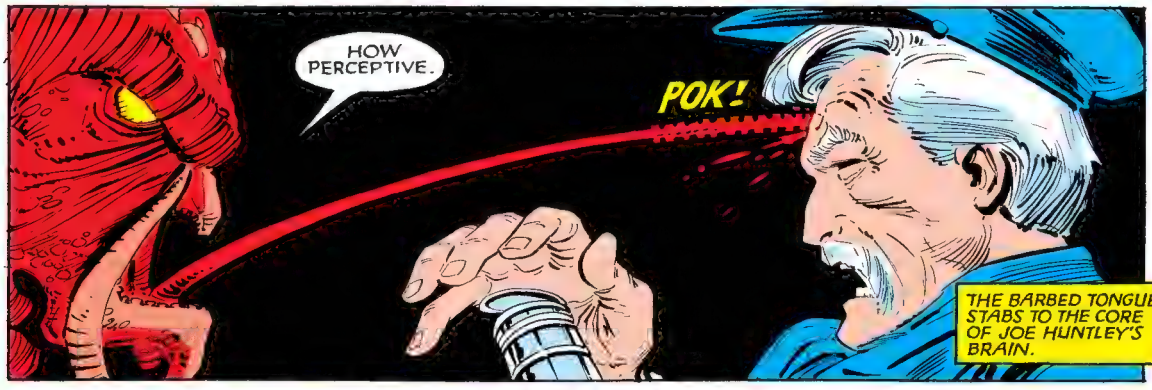

WRAITHKILL!
SHE'S SOAKED TO THE SKIN BEFORE SHE TAKES A DOZEN STEPS, BUT SHE DOESN'T CARE.
ORORO ONLY WANTS TO BE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, AS FAST AS POSSIBLE, FROM EAGLE PLAZA, AND THE MAN WHO LIVES ATOP THIS GLEAMING, HUNDRED-STORY SKYSCRAPER--
--FORGE.
A MAN SHE MIGHT HAVE LOVED.
THE MAN WHO DESTROYED HER.
555
A STAN LEE PRESENTATION, STARRING THE UNCANNY X-MEN
CHRIS CLAREMONT, WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. & DAN GREEN ARTISTS
TOM ORZECHOWSKI letterer
GLYNIS WEIN colorist
ANN NOCENTI, EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

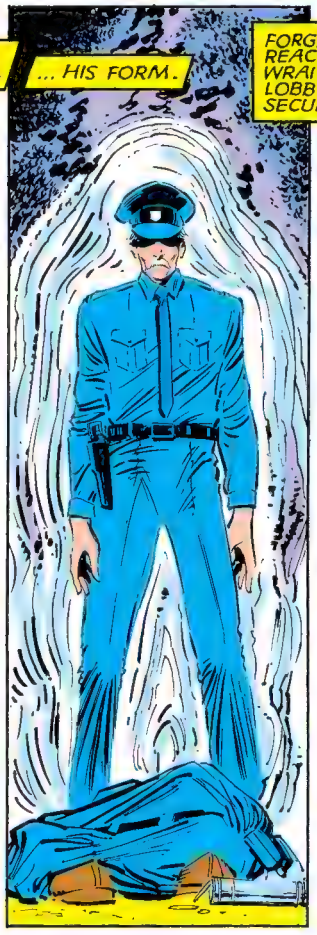

WRAPPED IN BLEAK AND BITTER THOUGHTS--SENSES DEADENED BY THE TORRENTIAL RAIN--
--ORORO DOES NOT NOTICE A FLASH OF LIGHT FROM THE LOBBY...
... NOR THE CREATURE THAT MATERIALIZES WITHIN.
IT IS A DIRE WRAITH--
--ONE OF A RACE OF SORCEROUS ALIENS, WHOSE GOAL IS THE SUBJUGATION OF HUMANKIND.
ITS MISSION IS TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF FORGE'S DEFENSES.
AAAAAIIIIEEEE!
IN THAT, IT IS QUITE SUCCESSFUL.
CLANGALANGALANGALA
AN ALARM--?!
I THOUGHT I HEARD A SCREAM--BUT IT MAY JUST HAVE BEEN THE WIND.
"NOTHING APPEARS OUT OF THE ORDINARY."
INSPECTOR MATHIS, FBI.
WE'RE ASSIGNED TO PROTECT FORGE.
GLAD T'SEE YA--IT'S BEEN A WILD NIGHT. C'MON IN!


MANY THANKS, OFFICER.
FORGE
WHAT THE--?!
YOU'RE NOT HUMAN!?!


HOW PERCEPTIVE.
POK!
THE BARBED TONGUE STABS TO THE CORE OF JOE HUNTLEY'S BRAIN.

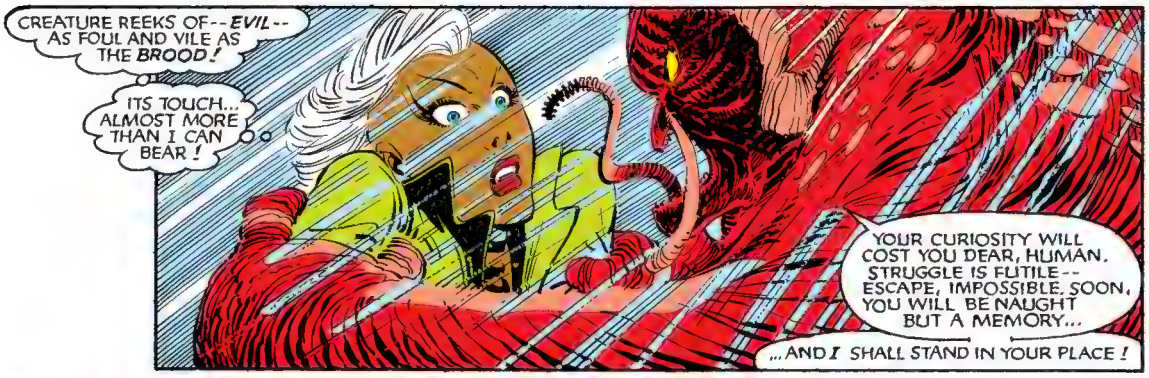
THERE IS A MOMENT OF EXQUISITE AGONY -- SAVORED BY THE WRAITH --
-- THEN OBLIVION...

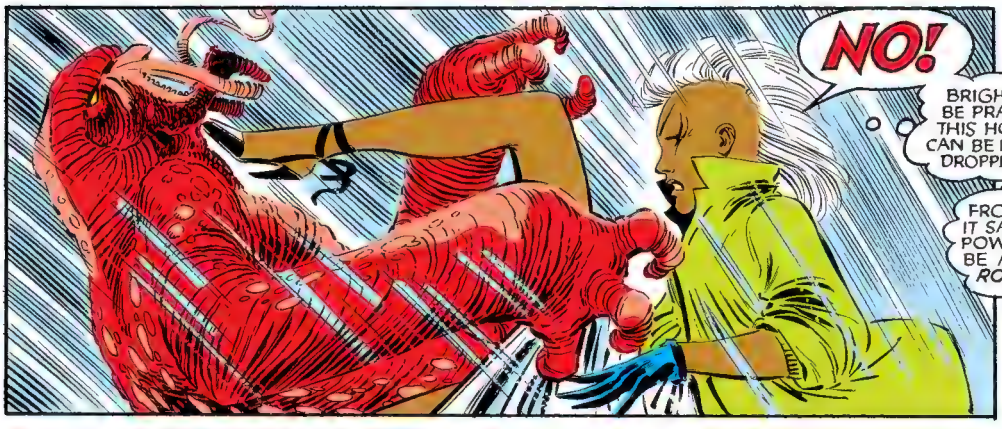
... AS SHE ABSORBS HIS MEMORIES...
... HIS IDENTITY...

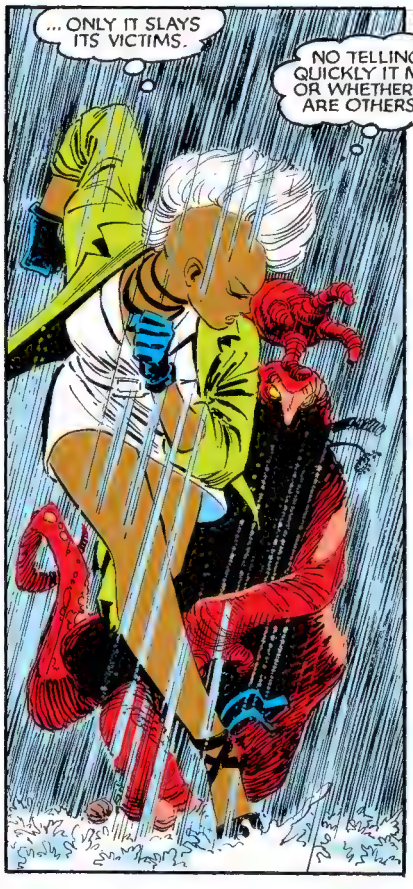

... HIS FORM.

FORGE'S SENSORS DO NOT REACT WHEN THE WRAITH CROSSES THE LOBBY TO THE MAIN SECURITY CONSOLE.
SECURITY
TO THEM, JOE IS AS HUMAN AS HE EVER WAS.

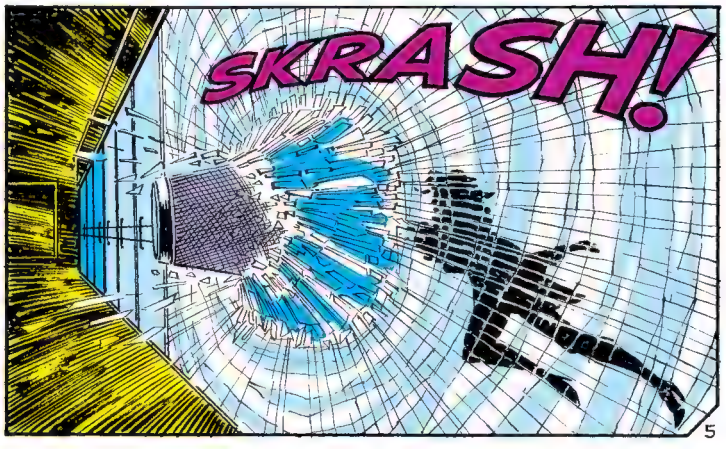
JOE, THIS IS FORGE.
YESSIR?
I JUST GOT AN INTRUDER ALERT ON MY STATUS BOARD.
FALSE ALARM, BOSS. DANG STORM'S TRIGGERING GLITCHES THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM. NOT T' FRET, THOUGH, EV'RYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL.
KEEP ME POSTED, WILL YOU, JOE?
CAN DO, SIR. G'NIGHT.
I HAVE NEUTRALIZED ALL INTERNAL SURVEILLANCE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS BELOW FORGE'S RESIDENCE. HE IS BLIND TO ANY WRAITH PRESENCE, MY SISTERS...
... AND UNABLE TO DO US HARM.
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THERE-- SO HARD TO TELL. I CAN BARELY SEE.
WHY EVEN BOTHER, OR CARE?! THIS IS NO CONCERN OF MINE -- I SHOULD LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE...
...AND BE ON MY WAY-- EH?!
SOMETHING BEHIND ME--?!
GODDESS!?!


CREATURE REEKS OF--EVIL--AS FOUL AND VILE AS THE BROOD!
ITS TOUCH... ALMOST MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!
YOUR CURIOSITY WILL COST YOU DEAR, HUMAN. STRUGGLE IS FUTILE--ESCAPE, IMPOSSIBLE. SOON, YOU WILL BE NAUGHT BUT A MEMORY...
...AND I SHALL STAND IN YOUR PLACE!

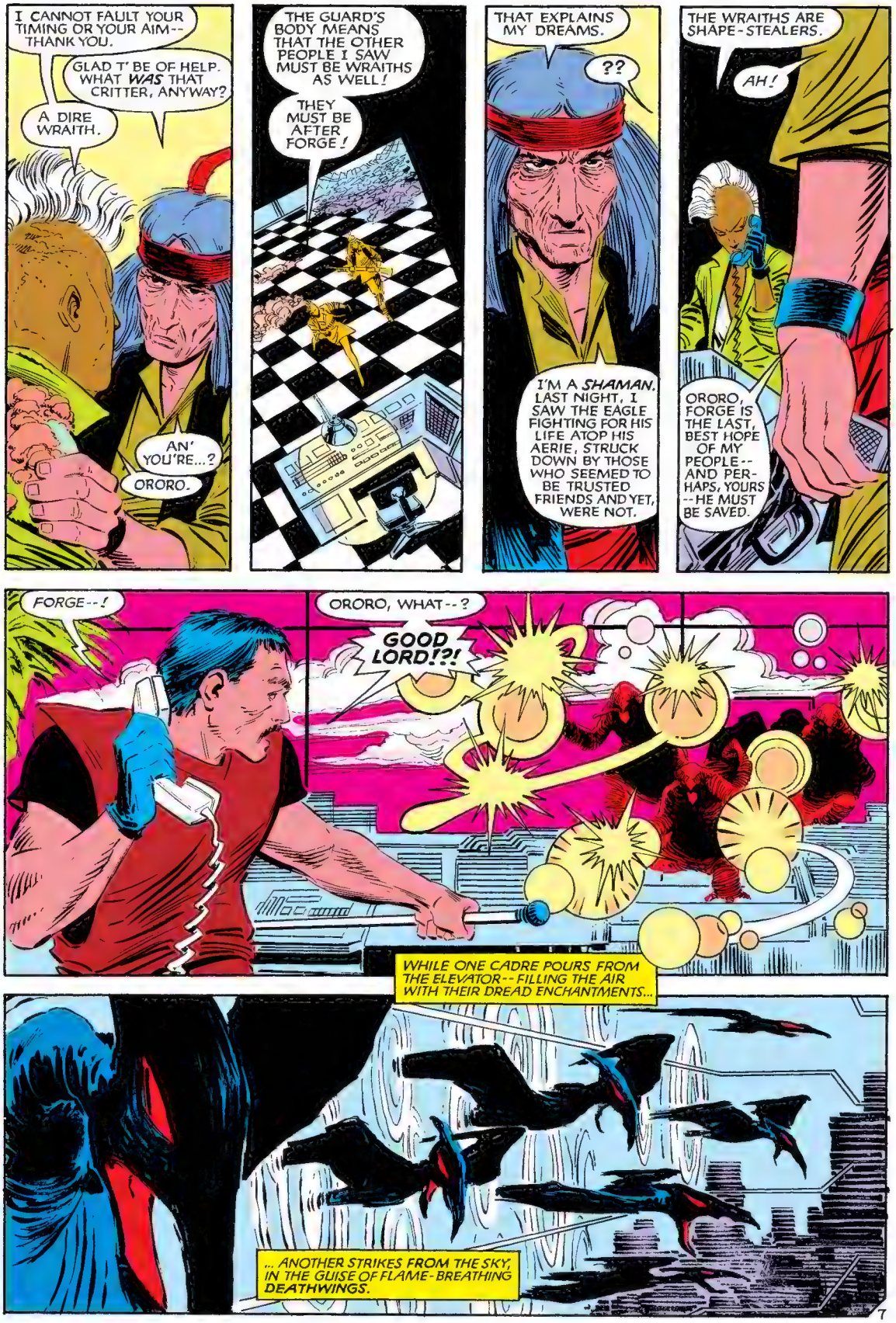

NO!
BRIGHT LADY BE PRAISED, THIS HORROR CAN BE HURT! IT DROPPED ME!
FROM WHAT IT SAID, IT'S POWER MUST BE AKIN TO ROGUE'S...


...ONLY IT SLAYS ITS VICTIMS.
NO TELLING HOW QUICKLY IT MOVES--OR WHETHER THERE ARE OTHERS NEARBY--

--THE SAFEST PLACE TO RUN IS FORGE'S BUILDING!


SKRASH!

THERE IS NO HELP FOR YOU HERE, MAMMAL. THIS PLACE-- LIKE ITS MASTER-- WILL SOON BELONG TO THE DIRE WRAITHS!
A CRUMPLED UNIFORM-- A PILE OF DUST-- THE GUARD?!
OH, THE POOR MAN!
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
KLIK!
YOU WILL NOT DIE UNAVENGED, MY FRIEND!
YOUR WEAPON IS EMPTY!
AND THOUGH I AM SORELY WOUNDED--
--YOUR LIFE ESSENCE WILL RESTORE--
PHOOM!
UGH! THE WRAITH-- DISINTEGRATING! BY ALL THAT IS HOLY, THE STENCH IS WORSE THAN A CHARNAL PIT!
IT WAS SHOT-- BUT WHO?!!
NAME'S NAZE.
YOU OKAY, MA'AM?


I CANNOT FAULT YOUR TIMING OR YOUR AIM-- THANK YOU.
GLAD T' BE OF HELP. WHAT *WAS* THAT CRITTER, ANYWAY?
A DIRE WRAITH.
AN' YOU'RE...?
ORORO.
THE GUARD'S BODY MEANS THAT THE OTHER PEOPLE I SAW MUST BE WRAITHS AS WELL!
THEY MUST BE AFTER FORGE!
THAT EXPLAINS MY DREAMS.
??
I'M A *SHAMAN*. LAST NIGHT, I SAW THE EAGLE FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE ATOP HIS AERIE, STRUCK DOWN BY THOSE WHO SEEMED TO BE TRUSTED FRIENDS AND YET, WERE NOT.
THE WRAITHS ARE SHAPE-STEALERS.
AH!
ORORO, FORGE IS THE LAST, BEST HOPE OF MY PEOPLE-- AND PERHAPS, YOURS --HE MUST BE SAVED.
FORGE--!
ORORO, WHAT--?
GOOD LORD!?!
WHILE ONE CADRE POURS FROM THE ELEVATOR-- FILLING THE AIR WITH THEIR DREAD ENCHANTMENTS...
*... ANOTHER STRIKES FROM THE SKY, IN THE GUISE OF FLAME-BREATHING **DEATHWINGS**.*

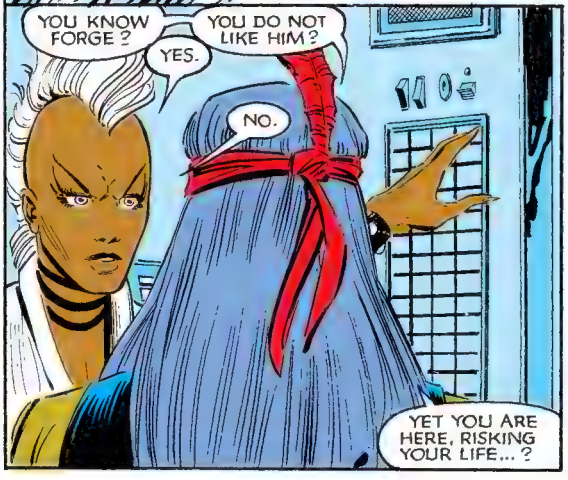
TOO LATE.
SO WHAT NOW?
SIGH--WE GO TO HIS RESCUE.

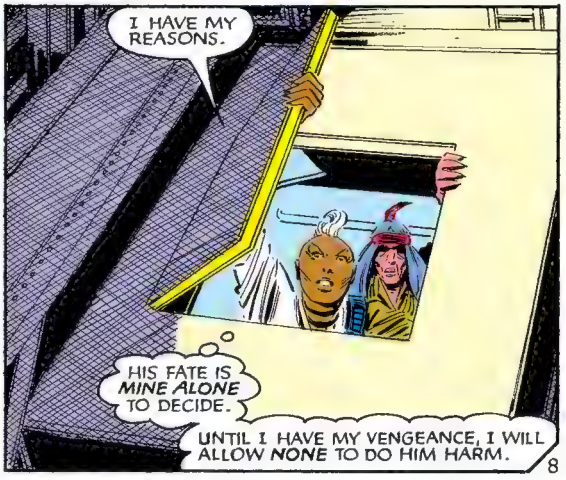
BEEN AWHILE SINCE I WAS IN A DECENT SCRAP. I'M LONG OVERDUE.
I HAVE A FRIEND...

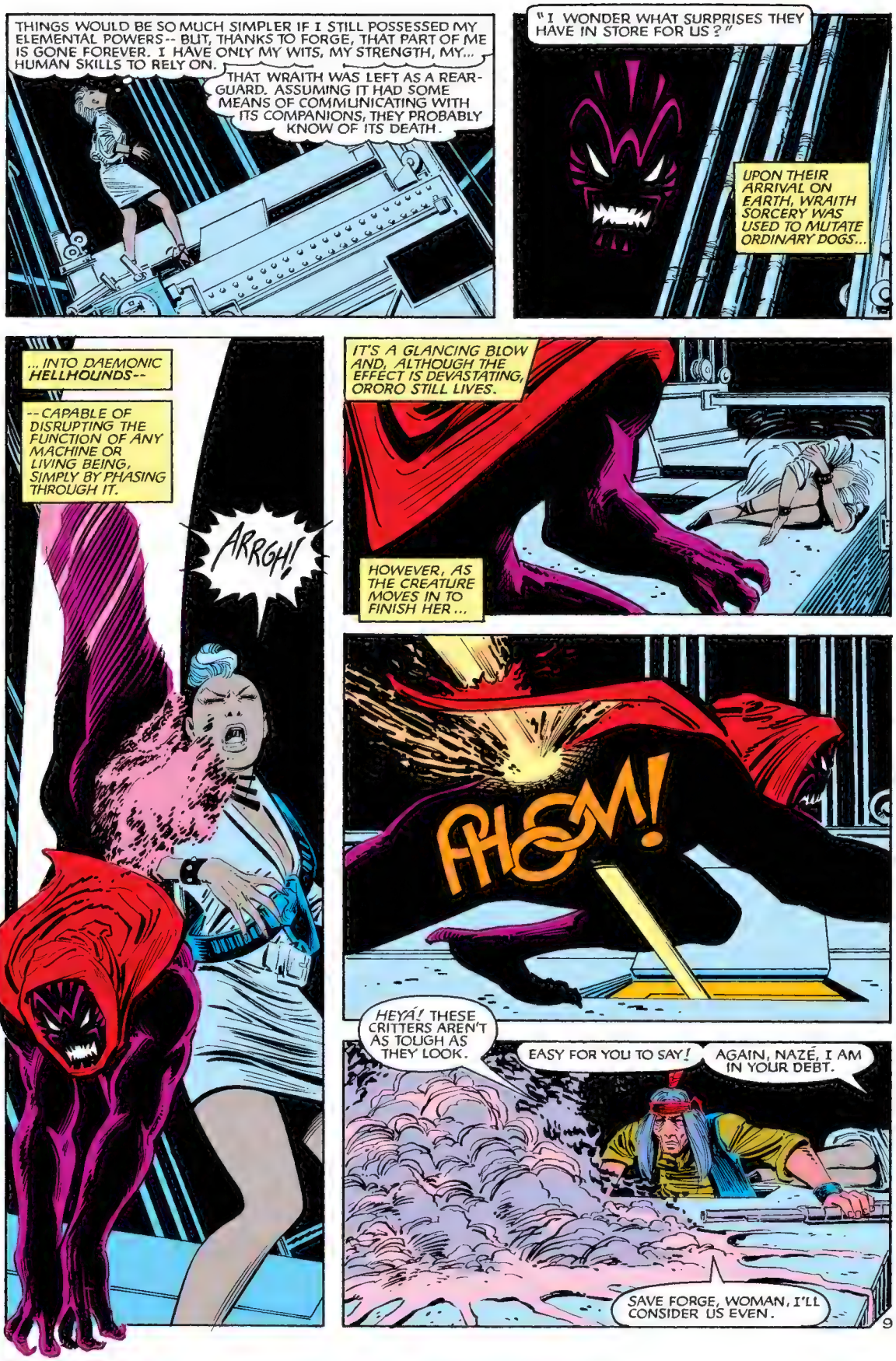
... WHO WOULD CONSIDER YOU A MAN AFTER HIS OWN HEART. I WISH HE WAS HERE.
WE'LL DO FINE--
--'SPECIALLY THE WAY YOU SHOOT.

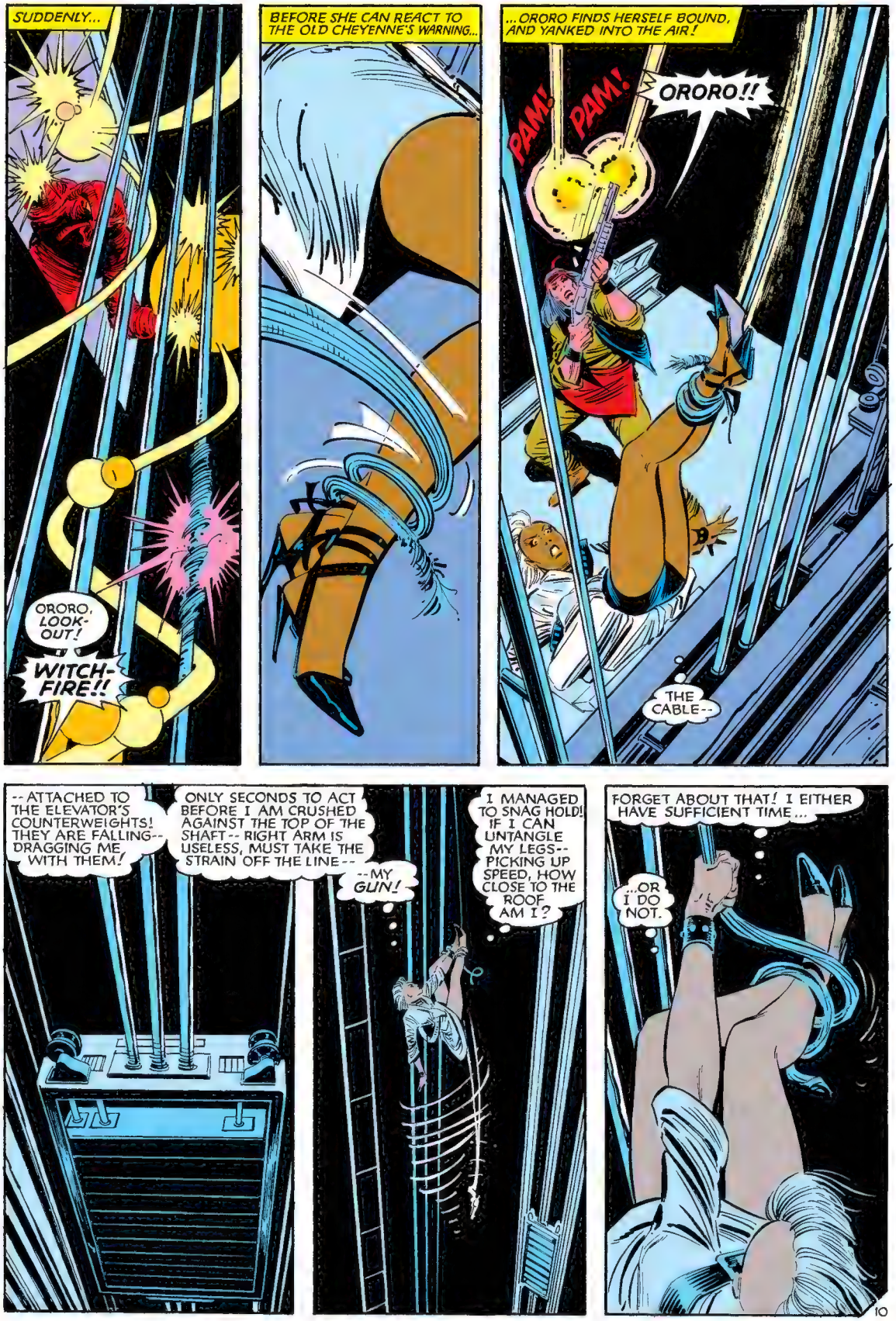
MY FRIEND TAUGHT ME.
WOLVERINE-- I HAVE MY POWERS TO PROTECT ME, AND I HAVE SWORN NEVER AGAIN TO TAKE ANOTHER'S LIFE. WHY SHOULD I LEARN TO USE THIS?
'CAUSE Y' NEVER KNOW WHEN THAT KNOWLEDGE'LL COME IN HANDY, DARLIN'. A GUN'S THE LAST THING ANYONE'D EXPECT FROM YOU.

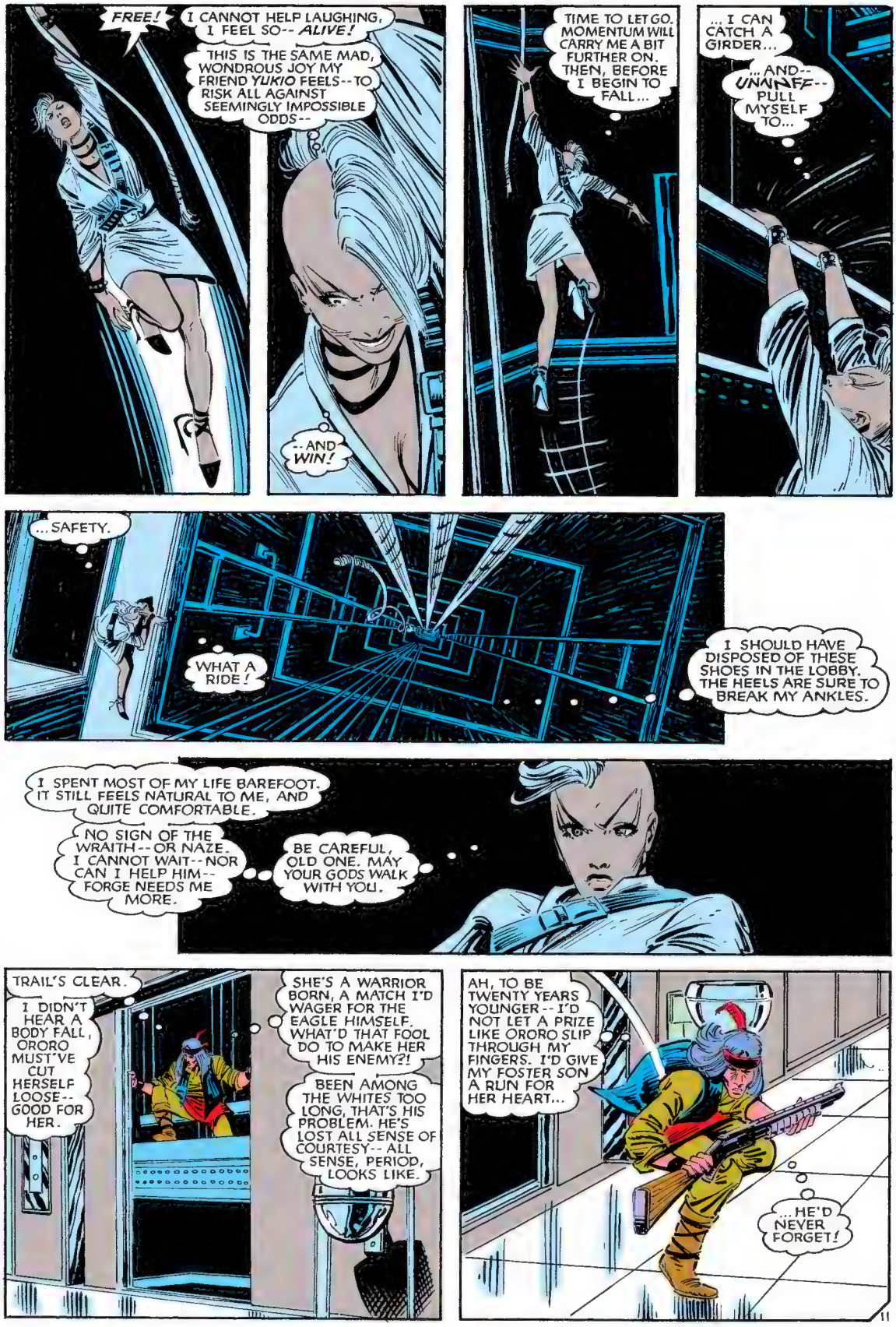
SOMEDAY, THAT MIGHT GIVE YOU THE EDGE YOU NEED TO SURVIVE.

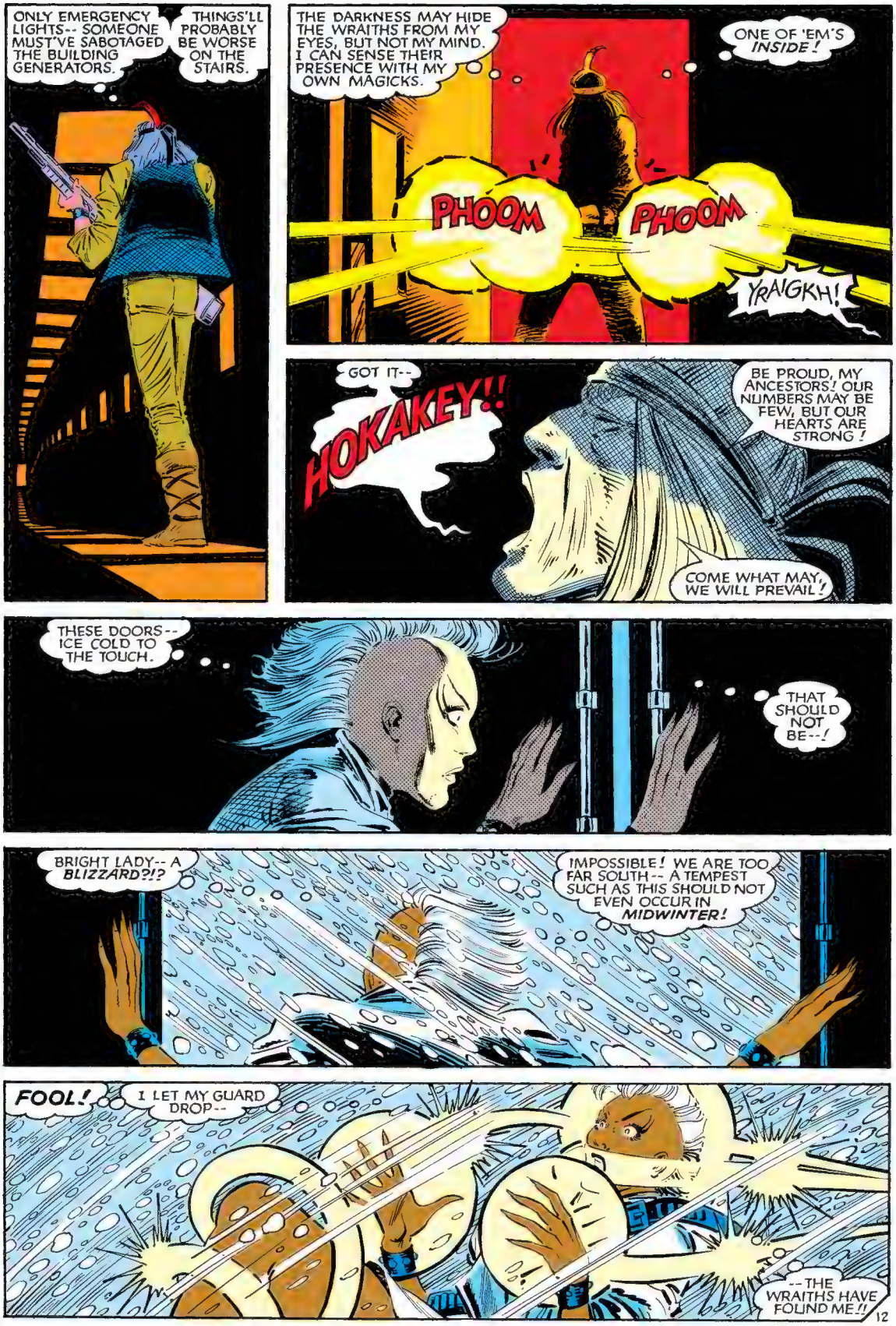

YOU KNOW FORGE?
YOU DO NOT LIKE HIM?
YES.
NO.
YET YOU ARE HERE, RISKING YOUR LIFE... ?

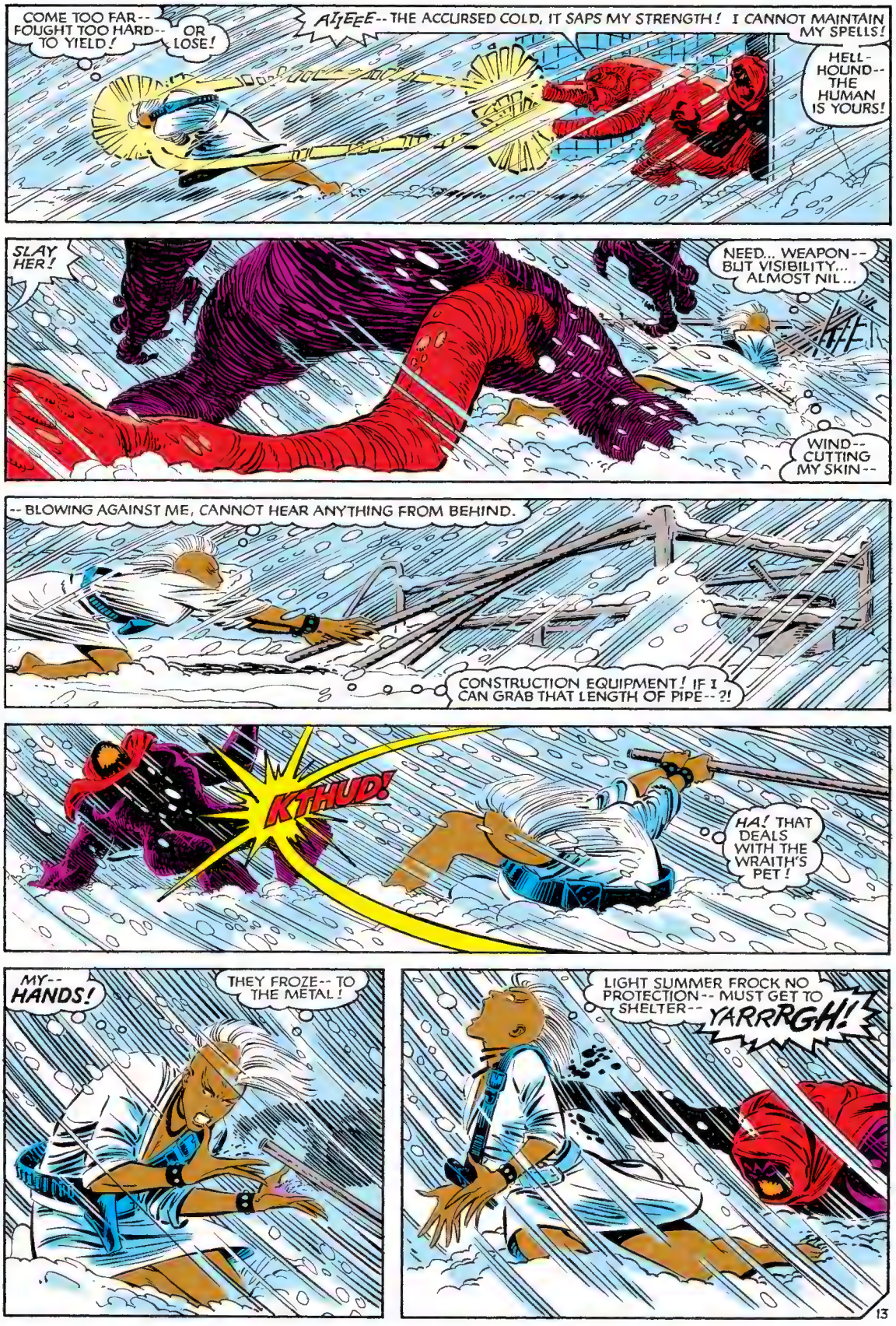

I HAVE MY REASONS.
HIS FATE IS MINE ALONE TO DECIDE.
UNTIL I HAVE MY VENGEANCE, I WILL ALLOW NONE TO DO HIM HARM.

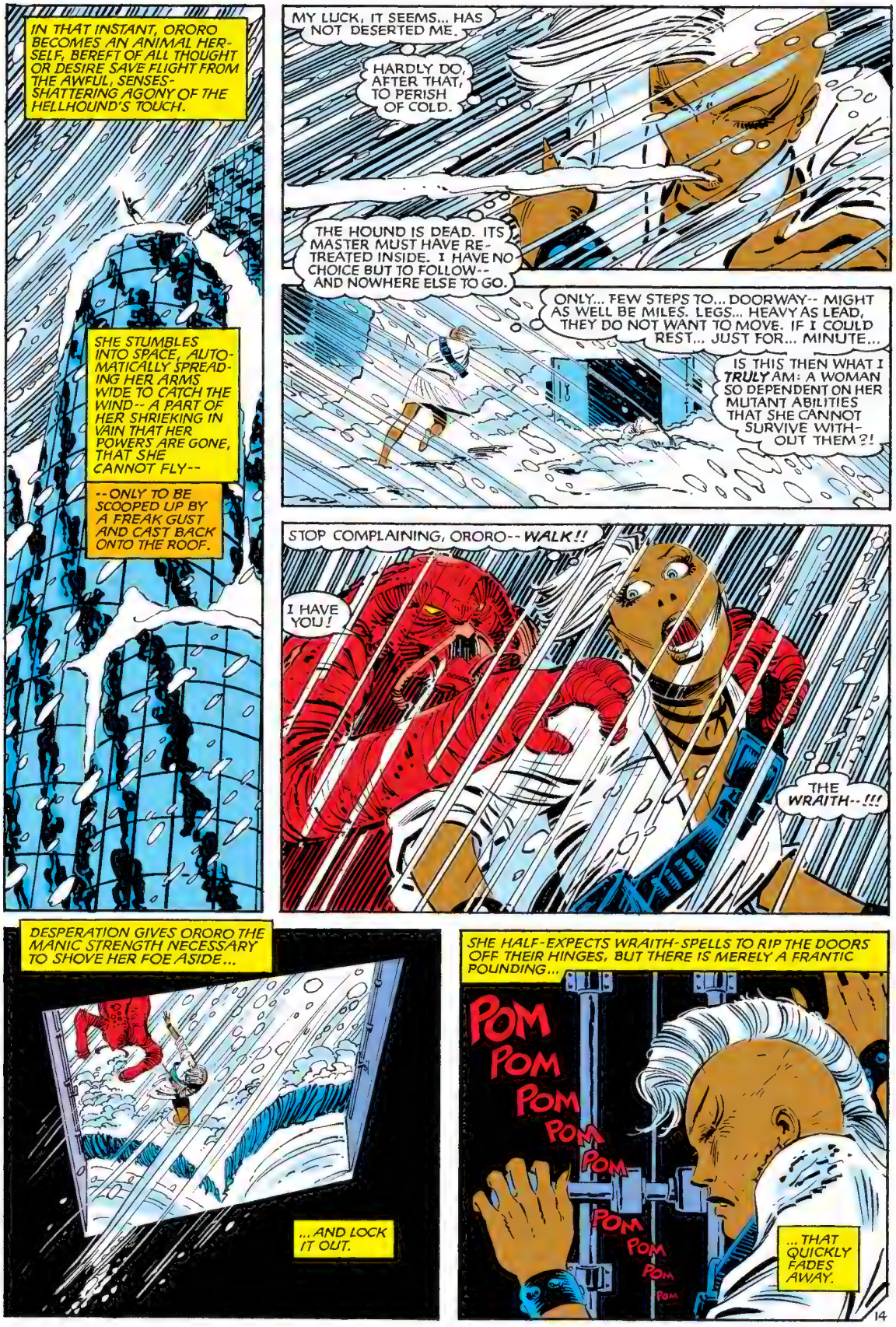

THINGS WOULD BE SO MUCH SIMPLER IF I STILL POSSESSED MY ELEMENTAL POWERS-- BUT, THANKS TO FORGE, THAT PART OF ME IS GONE FOREVER. I HAVE ONLY MY WITS, MY STRENGTH, MY... HUMAN SKILLS TO RELY ON.
THAT WRAITH WAS LEFT AS A REAR-GUARD. ASSUMING IT HAD SOME MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH ITS COMPANIONS, THEY PROBABLY KNOW OF ITS DEATH.
"I WONDER WHAT SURPRISES THEY HAVE IN STORE FOR US?"
UPON THEIR ARRIVAL ON EARTH, WRAITH SORCERY WAS USED TO MUTATE ORDINARY DOGS...
... INTO DAEMONIC HELLHOUNDS--
--CAPABLE OF DISRUPTING THE FUNCTION OF ANY MACHINE OR LIVING BEING, SIMPLY BY PHASING THROUGH IT.
ARRGH!
IT'S A GLANCING BLOW AND, ALTHOUGH THE EFFECT IS DEVASTATING, ORORO STILL LIVES.
HOWEVER, AS THE CREATURE MOVES IN TO FINISH HER...
FHOOM!
HEYA! THESE CRITTERS AREN'T AS TOUGH AS THEY LOOK.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY!
AGAIN, NAZE, I AM IN YOUR DEBT.
SAVE FORGE, WOMAN, I'LL CONSIDER US EVEN.

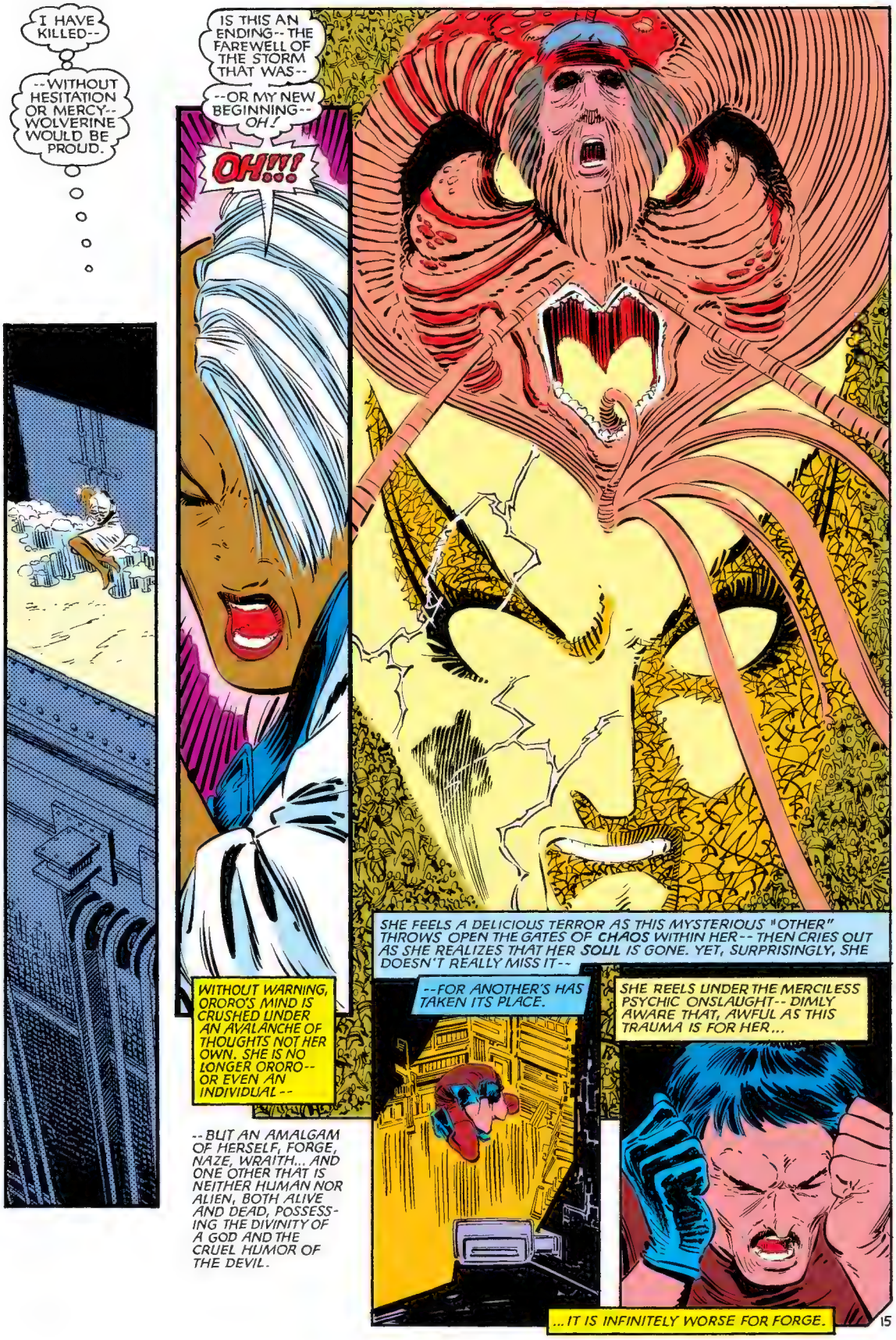

SUDDENLY...
ORORO, LOOK-OUT!
WITCH-FIRE!!
BEFORE SHE CAN REACT TO THE OLD CHEYENNE'S WARNING...
...ORORO FINDS HERSELF BOUND, AND YANKED INTO THE AIR!
PAM!
PAM!
ORORO!!
THE CABLE--
--ATTACHED TO THE ELEVATOR'S COUNTERWEIGHTS! THEY ARE FALLING-- DRAGGING ME WITH THEM!
ONLY SECONDS TO ACT BEFORE I AM CRUSHED AGAINST THE TOP OF THE SHAFT-- RIGHT ARM IS USELESS, MUST TAKE THE STRAIN OFF THE LINE--
--MY GUN!
I MANAGED TO SNAG HOLD! IF I CAN UNTANGLE MY LEGS-- PICKING UP SPEED, HOW CLOSE TO THE ROOF AM I?
FORGET ABOUT THAT! I EITHER HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME...
...OR I DO NOT.

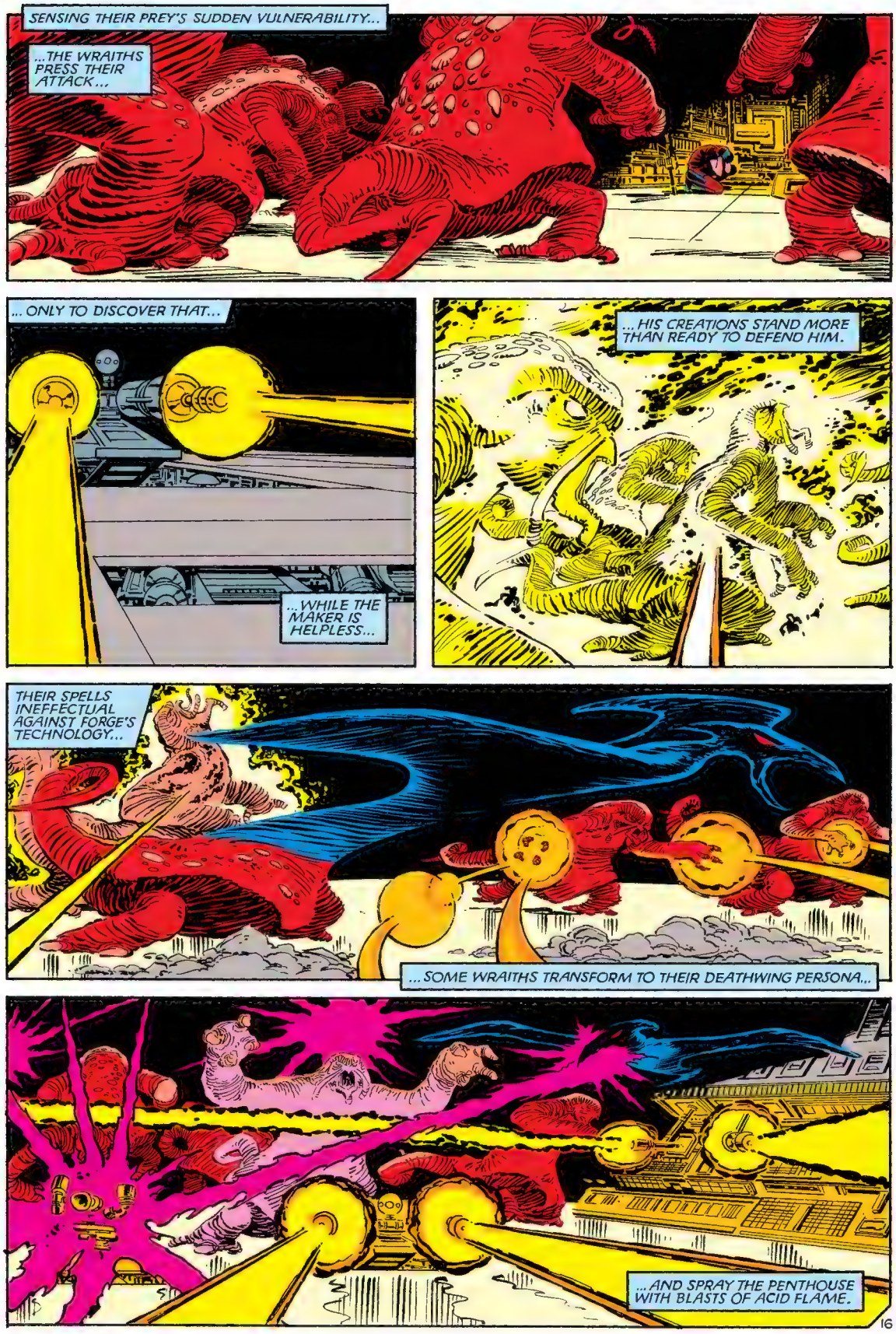

FREE!
I CANNOT HELP LAUGHING, I FEEL SO-- ALIVE!
THIS IS THE SAME MAD, WONDROUS JOY MY FRIEND YUKIO FEELS--TO RISK ALL AGAINST SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE ODDS--
--AND WIN!
TIME TO LET GO. MOMENTUM WILL CARRY ME A BIT FURTHER ON. THEN, BEFORE I BEGIN TO FALL...
... I CAN CATCH A GIRDER...
... AND-- UNAIDED-- PULL MYSELF TO...
... SAFETY.
WHAT A RIDE!
I SHOULD HAVE DISPOSED OF THESE SHOES IN THE LOBBY. THE HEELS ARE SURE TO BREAK MY ANKLES.
I SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE BAREFOOT. IT STILL FEELS NATURAL TO ME, AND QUITE COMFORTABLE.
NO SIGN OF THE WRAITH--OR NAZE. I CANNOT WAIT--NOR CAN I HELP HIM--FORGE NEEDS ME MORE.
BE CAREFUL, OLD ONE. MAY YOUR GODS WALK WITH YOU.
TRAIL'S CLEAR.
I DIDN'T HEAR A BODY FALL, ORORO MUST'VE CUT HERSELF LOOSE--GOOD FOR HER.
SHE'S A WARRIOR BORN, A MATCH I'D WAGER FOR THE EAGLE HIMSELF. WHAT'D THAT FOOL DO TO MAKE HER HIS ENEMY?!
BEEN AMONG THE WHITES TOO LONG, THAT'S HIS PROBLEM. HE'S LOST ALL SENSE OF COURTESY--ALL SENSE, PERIOD, LOOKS LIKE.
AH, TO BE TWENTY YEARS YOUNGER--I'D NOT LET A PRIZE LIKE ORORO SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS. I'D GIVE MY FOSTER SON A RUN FOR HER HEART...
...HE'D NEVER FORGET!


ONLY EMERGENCY LIGHTS-- SOMEONE MUST'VE SABOTAGED THE BUILDING GENERATORS.
THINGS'LL PROBABLY BE WORSE ON THE STAIRS.
THE DARKNESS MAY HIDE THE WRAITHS FROM MY EYES, BUT NOT MY MIND. I CAN SENSE THEIR PRESENCE WITH MY OWN MAGICKS.
ONE OF 'EM'S INSIDE!
PHOOM
PHOOM
YRAIGKH!
GOT IT--
HOKAKEY!!
BE PROUD, MY ANCESTORS! OUR NUMBERS MAY BE FEW, BUT OUR HEARTS ARE STRONG!
COME WHAT MAY, WE WILL PREVAIL!
THESE DOORS-- ICE COLD TO THE TOUCH.
THAT SHOULD NOT BE--!
BRIGHT LADY-- A BLIZZARD?!?
IMPOSSIBLE! WE ARE TOO FAR SOUTH-- A TEMPEST SUCH AS THIS SHOULD NOT EVEN OCCUR IN MIDWINTER!
FOOL!
I LET MY GUARD DROP--
-- THE WRAITHS HAVE FOUND ME!!

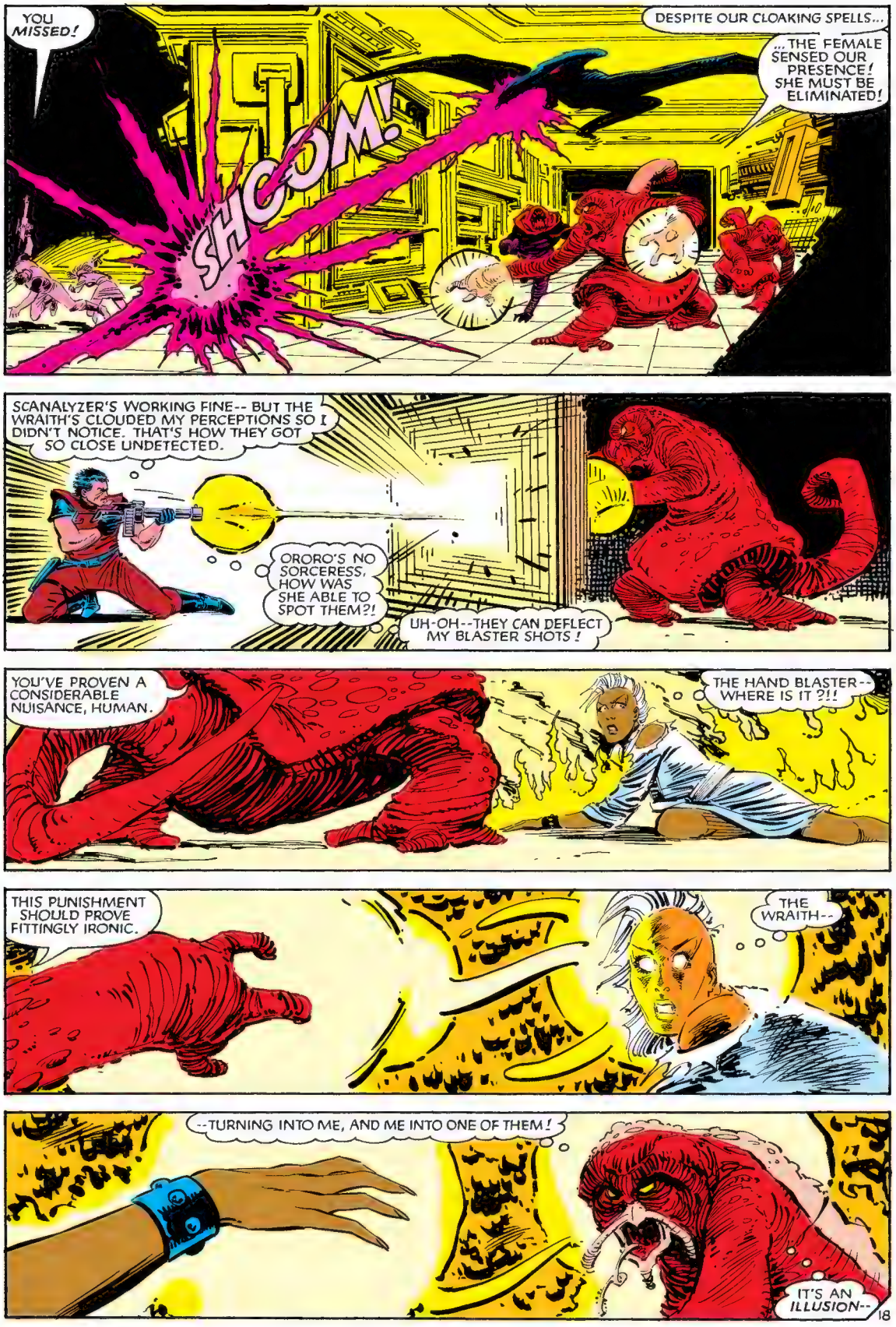

COME TOO FAR-- FOUGHT TOO HARD-- TO YIELD!
OR LOSE!
AIEEE-- THE ACCURSED COLD, IT SAPS MY STRENGTH! I CANNOT MAINTAIN MY SPELLS!
HELL-HOUND-- THE HUMAN IS YOURS!
SLAY HER!
NEED... WEAPON-- BUT VISIBILITY... ALMOST NIL...
WIND-- CUTTING MY SKIN--
-- BLOWING AGAINST ME, CANNOT HEAR ANYTHING FROM BEHIND.
CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT! IF I CAN GRAB THAT LENGTH OF PIPE--?!
KTHUD!
HA! THAT DEALS WITH THE WRAITH'S PET!
MY-- HANDS!
THEY FROZE-- TO THE METAL!
LIGHT SUMMER FROCK NO PROTECTION-- MUST GET TO SHELTER--
YARRRGH!


IN THAT INSTANT, ORORO BECOMES AN ANIMAL HERSELF, BEREFT OF ALL THOUGHT OR DESIRE SAVE FLIGHT FROM THE AWFUL, SENSES-SHATTERING AGONY OF THE HELLHOUND'S TOUCH.
SHE STUMBLES INTO SPACE, AUTOMATICALLY SPREADING HER ARMS WIDE TO CATCH THE WIND-- A PART OF HER SHRIEKING IN VAIN THAT HER POWERS ARE GONE, THAT SHE CANNOT FLY--
--ONLY TO BE SCOOPED UP BY A FREAK GUST AND CAST BACK ONTO THE ROOF.
MY LUCK, IT SEEMS... HAS NOT DESERTED ME.
HARDLY DO, AFTER THAT, TO PERISH OF COLD.
THE HOUND IS DEAD. ITS MASTER MUST HAVE RETREATED INSIDE. I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW-- AND NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.
ONLY... FEW STEPS TO... DOORWAY-- MIGHT AS WELL BE MILES. LEGS... HEAVY AS LEAD, THEY DO NOT WANT TO MOVE. IF I COULD REST... JUST FOR... MINUTE...
IS THIS THEN WHAT I TRULY AM: A WOMAN SO DEPENDENT ON HER MUTANT ABILITIES THAT SHE CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT THEM?!
STOP COMPLAINING, ORORO-- WALK!!
I HAVE YOU!
THE WRAITH--!!!
DESPERATION GIVES ORORO THE MANIC STRENGTH NECESSARY TO SHOVE HER FOE ASIDE...
... AND LOCK IT OUT.
SHE HALF-EXPECTS WRAITH-SPELLS TO RIP THE DOORS OFF THEIR HINGES, BUT THERE IS MERELY A FRANTIC POUNDING...
POM POM POM POM POM POM POM POM POM
... THAT QUICKLY FADES AWAY.

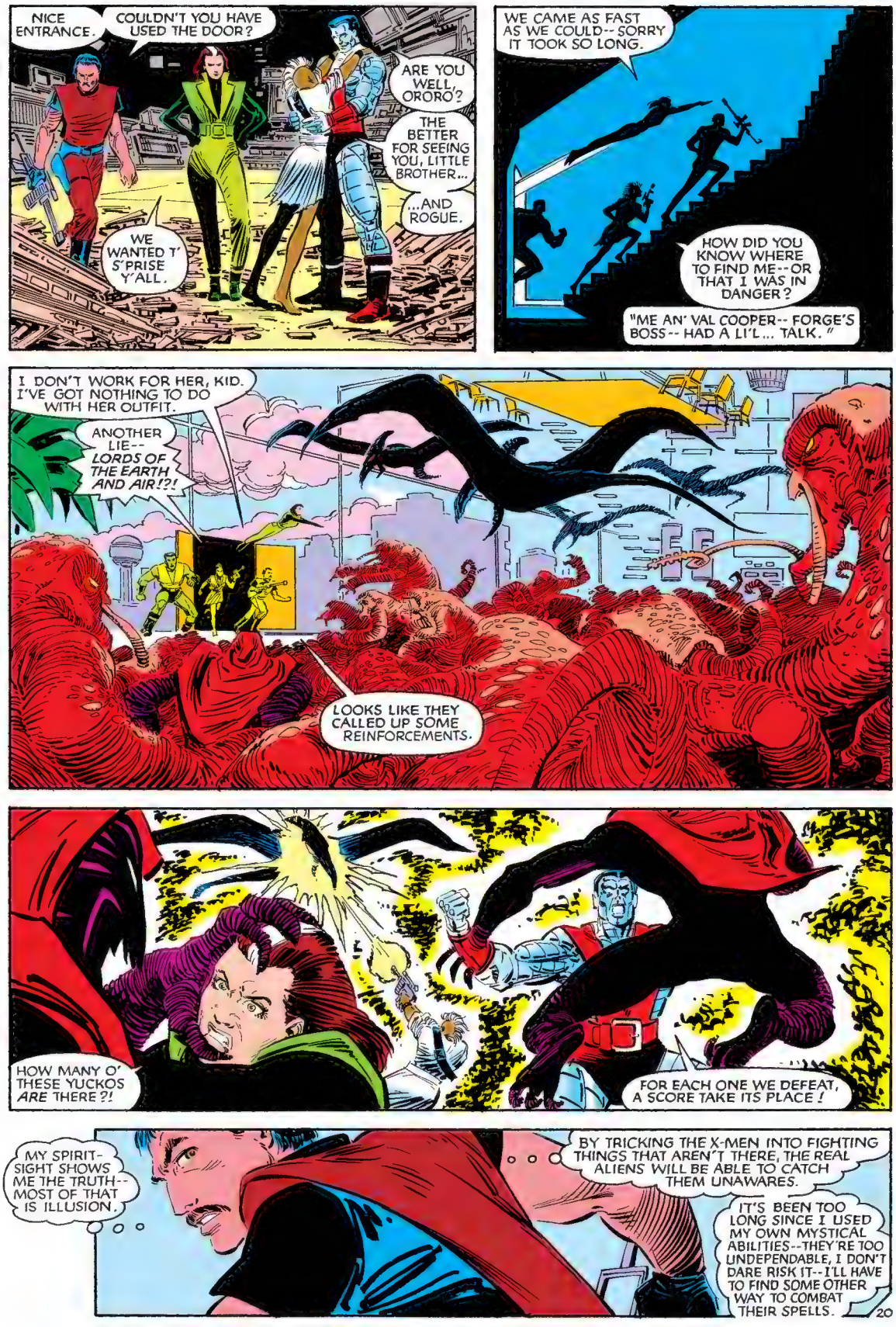

I HAVE KILLED--
--WITHOUT HESITATION OR MERCY-- WOLVERINE WOULD BE PROUD.
IS THIS AN ENDING-- THE FAREWELL OF THE STORM THAT WAS--
--OR MY NEW BEGINNING--
OH!
OH!!!
SHE FEELS A DELICIOUS TERROR AS THIS MYSTERIOUS "OTHER" THROWS OPEN THE GATES OF CHAOS WITHIN HER-- THEN CRIES OUT AS SHE REALIZES THAT HER SOUL IS GONE. YET, SURPRISINGLY, SHE DOESN'T REALLY MISS IT--
WITHOUT WARNING, ORORO'S MIND IS CRUSHED UNDER AN AVALANCHE OF THOUGHTS NOT HER OWN. SHE IS NO LONGER ORORO-- OR EVEN AN INDIVIDUAL--
--BUT AN AMALGAM OF HERSELF, FORGE, NAZE, WRAITH... AND ONE OTHER THAT IS NEITHER HUMAN NOR ALIEN, BOTH ALIVE AND DEAD, POSSESSING THE DIVINITY OF A GOD AND THE CRUEL HUMOR OF THE DEVIL.
--FOR ANOTHER'S HAS TAKEN ITS PLACE.
SHE REELS UNDER THE MERCILESS PSYCHIC ONSLAUGHT-- DIMLY AWARE THAT, AWFUL AS THIS TRAUMA IS FOR HER...
...IT IS INFINITELY WORSE FOR FORGE.


SENSING THEIR PREY'S SUDDEN VULNERABILITY...
...THE WRAITHS PRESS THEIR ATTACK...
... ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT...
...WHILE THE MAKER IS HELPLESS...
...HIS CREATIONS STAND MORE THAN READY TO DEFEND HIM.
THEIR SPELLS INEFFECTUAL AGAINST FORGE'S TECHNOLOGY...
...SOME WRAITHS TRANSFORM TO THEIR DEATHWING PERSONA...
...AND SPRAY THE PENTHOUSE WITH BLASTS OF ACID FLAME.

HOLDING YOUR OWN, I SEE.
FREEZE!
NOT A MOVE, ORORO, OR I'LL BURN YOU WHERE YOU STAND!
NO REACTION FROM MY SCANALYZER-- YOU'RE HUMAN!
CAN I SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU?
I SUPPOSE I MUST, SINCE THE BATTLE STILL RAGES.
WHERE ARE THE LIGHTS?
FIRST THING THE WRAITHS DID WAS ZAP THE GENERATORS. EMERGENCY SYSTEMS ARE HOLDING THEIR OWN, BUT I'VE HAD TO DIVERT ALL POWER TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL DEFENSES.
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU.
WHAT JUST HAPPENED, FORGE? SOME ENTITY BOUND US IN RAPPORT-- TRIED TO DRIVE US INSANE, I THINK SIMPLY FOR THE FUN OF IT!
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE.
I DOUBT THAT.
HOW NATURALLY YOU LIE. I SHOULD BE USED TO THAT BY NOW.
THINK WHAT YOU LIKE, ORORO, YOUR PRIVILEGE--
--BUT IF YOU'RE NOT HERE TO HELP, FIND A PLACE TO HIDE.
I PROMISED NAZE I WOULD SAVE YOU.
DON'T DO ME ANY FAVORS, LADY.
MY WORD, FORGE, IS MY BOND...
... MUCH AS I MIGHT WISH OTHERWISE--
--TAKE COVER!
ZARK!

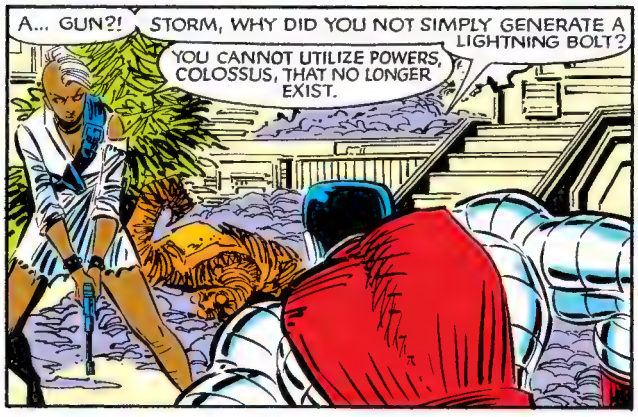

YOU MISSED!
DESPITE OUR CLOAKING SPELLS...
...THE FEMALE SENSED OUR PRESENCE! SHE MUST BE ELIMINATED!
SHCOM!
SCANALYZER'S WORKING FINE-- BUT THE WRAITH'S CLOUDED MY PERCEPTIONS SO I DIDN'T NOTICE. THAT'S HOW THEY GOT SO CLOSE UNDETECTED.
ORORO'S NO SORCERESS, HOW WAS SHE ABLE TO SPOT THEM?!
UH-OH--THEY CAN DEFLECT MY BLASTER SHOTS!
YOU'VE PROVEN A CONSIDERABLE NUISANCE, HUMAN.
THE HAND BLASTER-- WHERE IS IT?!!
THIS PUNISHMENT SHOULD PROVE FITTINGLY IRONIC.
THE WRAITH--
--TURNING INTO ME, AND ME INTO ONE OF THEM!
IT'S AN ILLUSION--

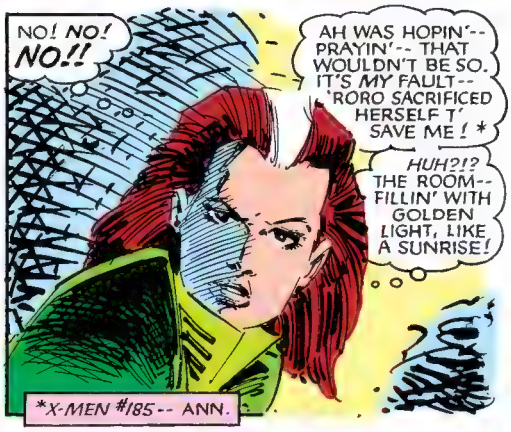
-- BUT HOW DO I CONVINCE FORGE?!
FORGE, THAT WRAITH-- TRIED TO GET ME!
DESTROY HER-- BEFORE SHE CAN CAST A SPELL!
MY PLEASURE!
SHOOSH!
YOU... KNEW THE TRUTH?
IT MEANT CALLING ON A PART OF MYSELF I'VE DENIED FOR TEN YEARS-- ABILITIES I SWORE NEVER TO USE AGAIN--
--BUT I FIGURED YOU WERE WORTH IT.
NAZE!
WE FEARED THE WORST.
OH YE OF LITTLE FAITH--!
I TAUGHT YOU EVERYTHING YOU KNOW, BOY, BUT NOT EVERYTHING I KNOW.
WE WERE CAUGHT IN A SOUL-LINK.
IF NOTHING HAPPENED TO NAZE, THEN WHAT TRIGGERED--
BIP BIP BIP BIP
GANGWAY, SUCKERS!
X-MEN COMIN' THROUGH!!
A CONTACT, CLOSE BY!
THE BUILDING--!
IT'S BEEN HIT, BY SOMETHING BIG!
COLOSSUS! ROGUE!!

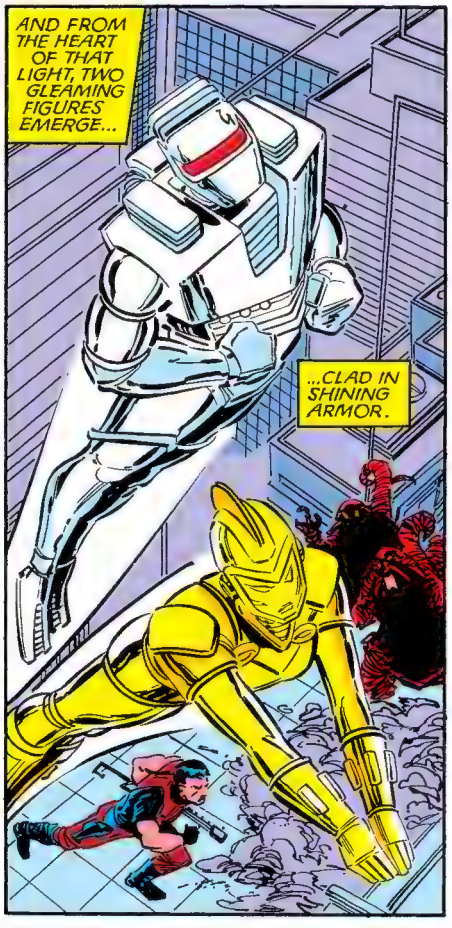

NICE ENTRANCE.
COULDN'T YOU HAVE USED THE DOOR?
ARE YOU WELL, ORORO?
THE BETTER FOR SEEING YOU, LITTLE BROTHER...
...AND ROGUE.
WE WANTED T' S'PRISE Y'ALL.
WE CAME AS FAST AS WE COULD-- SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG.
HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME--OR THAT I WAS IN DANGER?
"ME AN' VAL COOPER-- FORGE'S BOSS-- HAD A LI'L... TALK."
I DON'T WORK FOR HER, KID. I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH HER OUTFIT.
ANOTHER LIE-- LORDS OF THE EARTH AND AIR!?!
LOOKS LIKE THEY CALLED UP SOME REINFORCEMENTS.
HOW MANY O' THESE YUCKOS ARE THERE?!
FOR EACH ONE WE DEFEAT, A SCORE TAKE ITS PLACE!
MY SPIRIT-SIGHT SHOWS ME THE TRUTH-- MOST OF THAT IS ILLUSION.
BY TRICKING THE X-MEN INTO FIGHTING THINGS THAT AREN'T THERE, THE REAL ALIENS WILL BE ABLE TO CATCH THEM UNAWARES.
IT'S BEEN TOO LONG SINCE I USED MY OWN MYSTICAL ABILITIES--THEY'RE TOO UNDEPENDABLE, I DON'T DARE RISK IT--I'LL HAVE TO FIND SOME OTHER WAY TO COMBAT THEIR SPELLS.

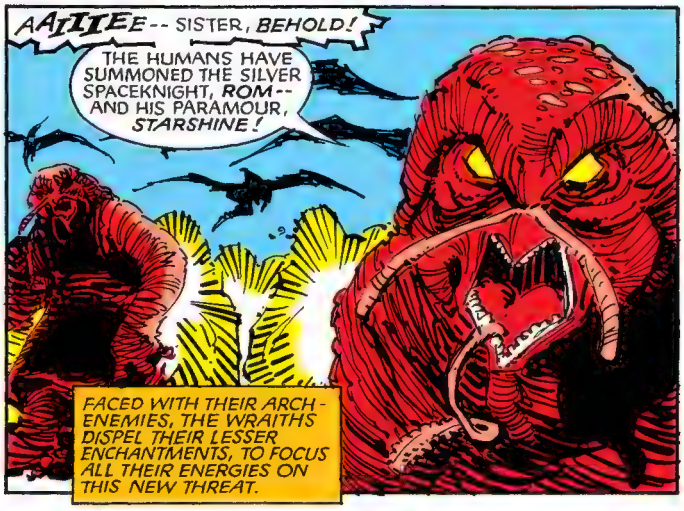
MEANWHILE...
THIS IS THE EAGLE'S NEST--FORGE'S SANCTUM SANCTORUM--THE SEAT AND NEXUS OF HIS MIGHT.
MOST IMPRESSIVE.
HIS POWER IS ALMOST BEYOND COMPREHENSION.
HE IS A FOOL TO DENY IT.
YOUR METALLOID FORM WILL NOT SAVE YOU, TERRAN.
NOTHING THAT LIVES CAN WITHSTAND OUR POWER!
ITS TOUCH, LIKE ACID--BURNING INTO MY BRAIN!
STRUGGLING TOO MUCH--NO CHANCE FOR A CLEAR SHOT!
HIT IT, PETER--HARD AS YOU CAN--OR YOU ARE LOST!
IMMEDIATELY, THE YOUNG RUSSIAN...
...LASHES OUT WITH THE FORCE OF A PILEDRIVER.

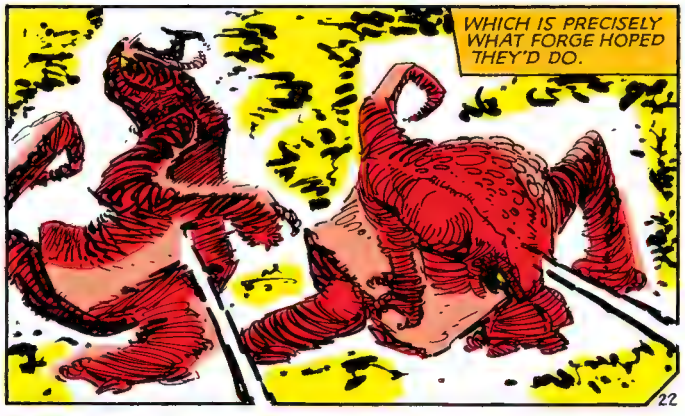
ORORO'S BLASTER...
... DOES THE REST.

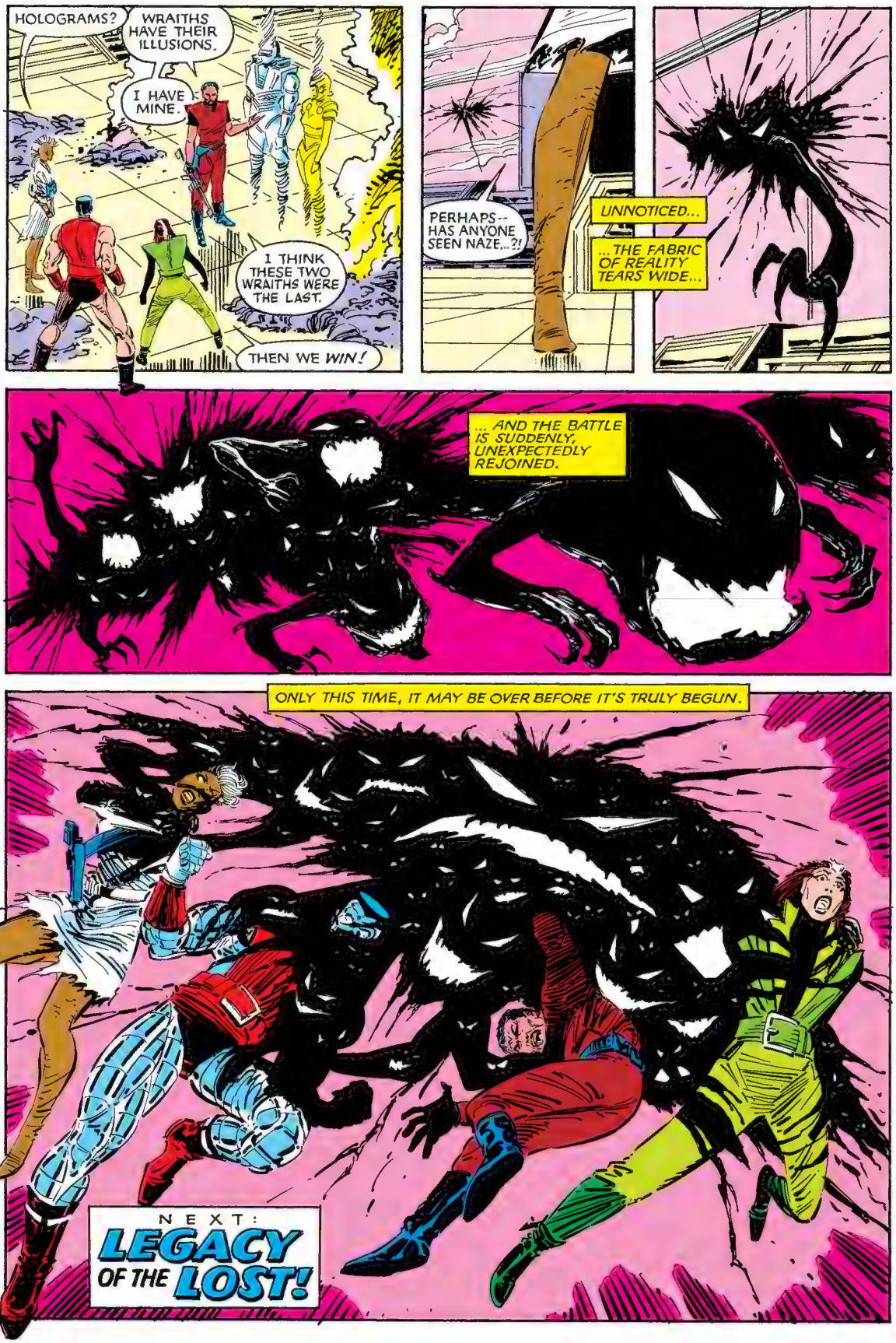

A... GUN?!
STORM, WHY DID YOU NOT SIMPLY GENERATE A LIGHTNING BOLT?
YOU CANNOT UTILIZE POWERS, COLOSSUS, THAT NO LONGER EXIST.

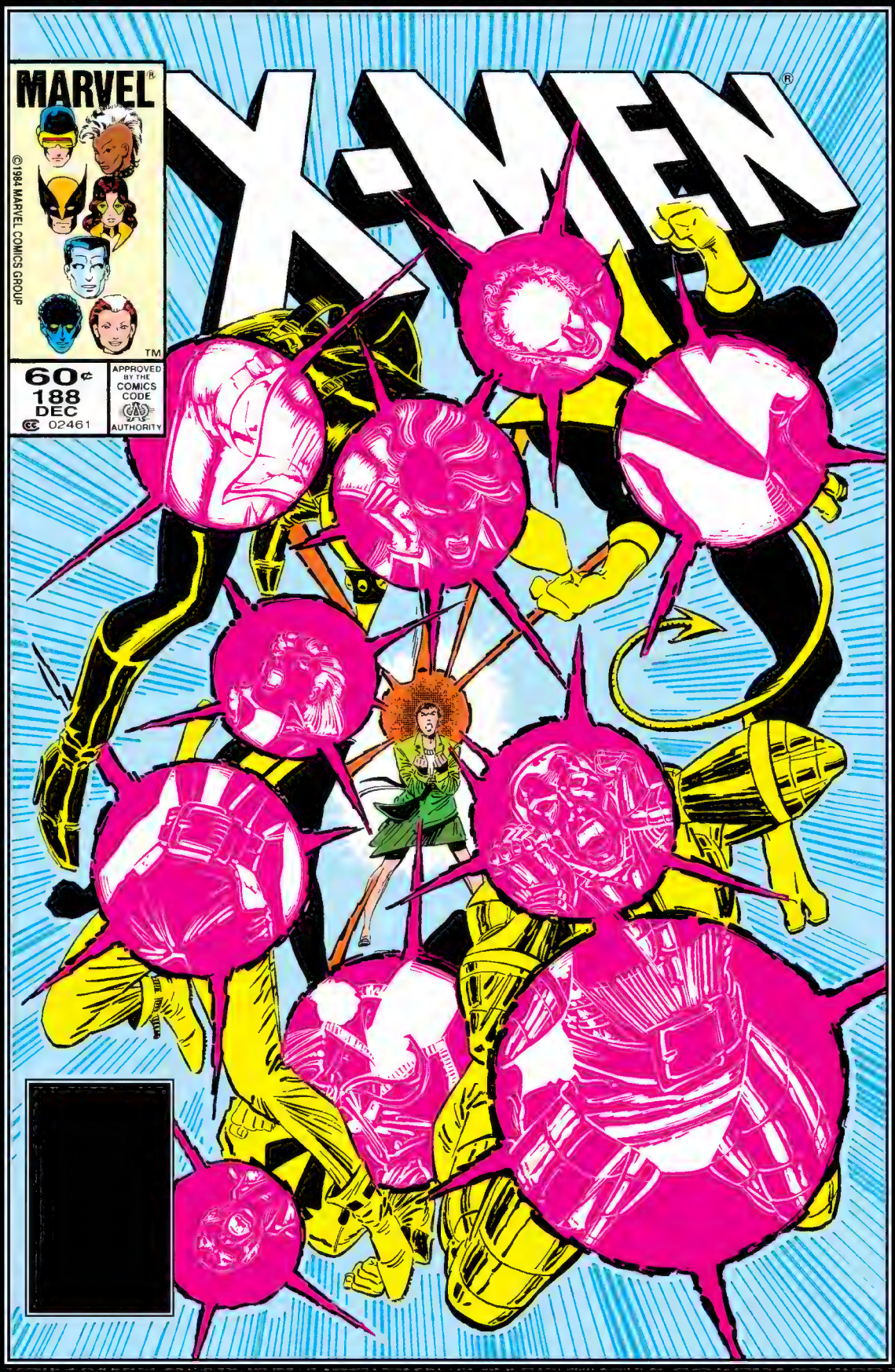

NO! NO! NO!!
AH WAS HOPIN'-- PRAYIN'-- THAT WOULDN'T BE SO. IT'S MY FAULT-- 'RORO SACRIFICED HERSELF T' SAVE ME! *
HUH?!? THE ROOM-- FILLIN' WITH GOLDEN LIGHT, LIKE A SUNRISE!
*X-MEN #185-- ANN.


AND FROM THE HEART OF THAT LIGHT, TWO GLEAMING FIGURES EMERGE...
...CLAD IN SHINING ARMOR.


AATIEE-- SISTER, BEHOLD!
THE HUMANS HAVE SUMMONED THE SILVER SPACEKNIGHT, ROM-- AND HIS PARAMOUR, STARSHINE!
FACED WITH THEIR ARCH-ENEMIES, THE WRAITHS DISPEL THEIR LESSER ENCHANTMENTS, TO FOCUS ALL THEIR ENERGIES ON THIS NEW THREAT.


WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT FORGE HOPED THEY'D DO.


HOLOGRAMS?
WRAITHS HAVE THEIR ILLUSIONS.
I HAVE MINE.
I THINK THESE TWO WRAITHS WERE THE LAST.
THEN WE WIN!
PERHAPS--HAS ANYONE SEEN NAZE...?!
UNNOTICED...
...THE FABRIC OF REALITY TEARS WIDE...
... AND THE BATTLE IS SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY REJOINED.
ONLY THIS TIME, IT MAY BE OVER BEFORE IT'S TRULY BEGUN.
NEXT:
LEGACY OF THE LOST!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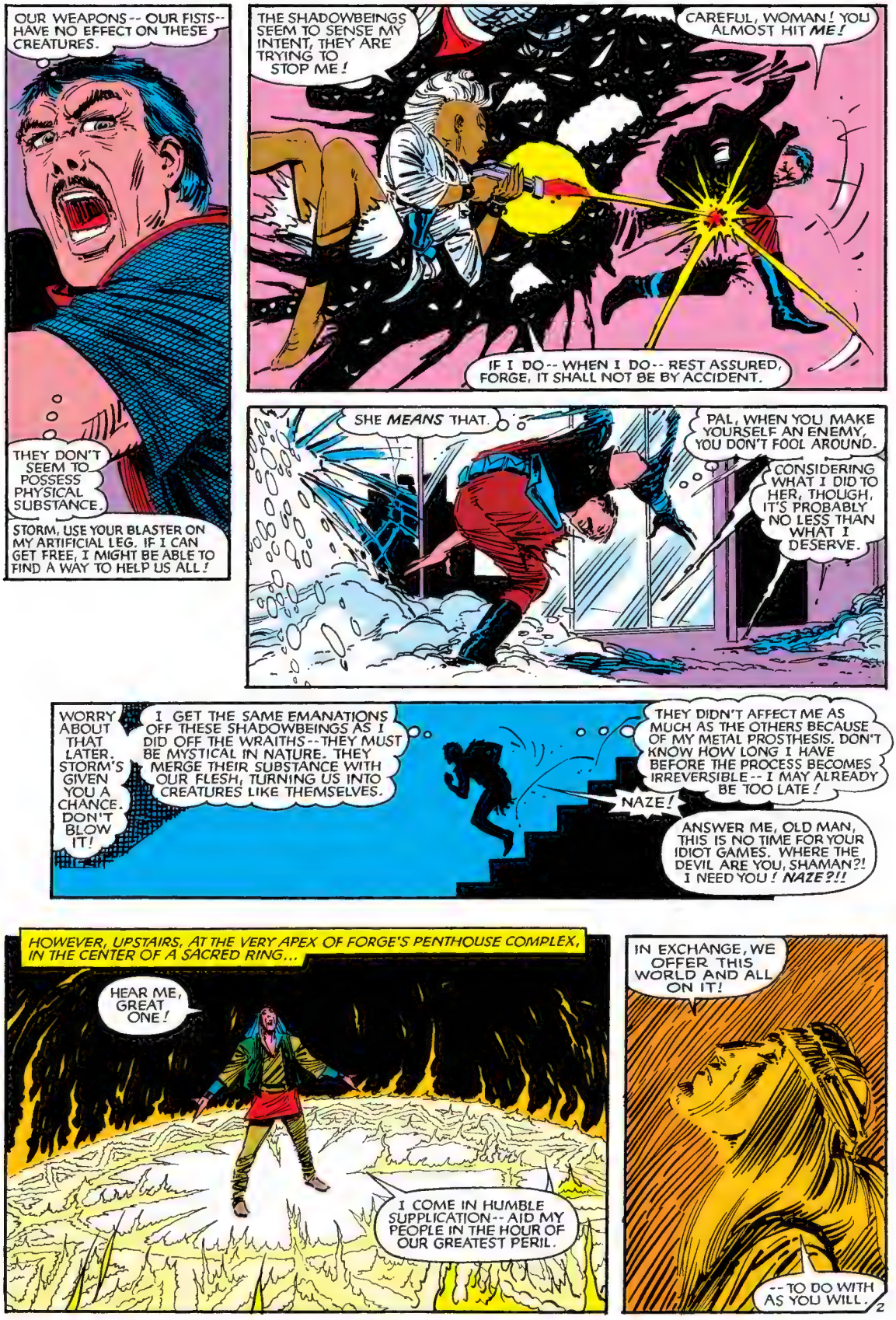
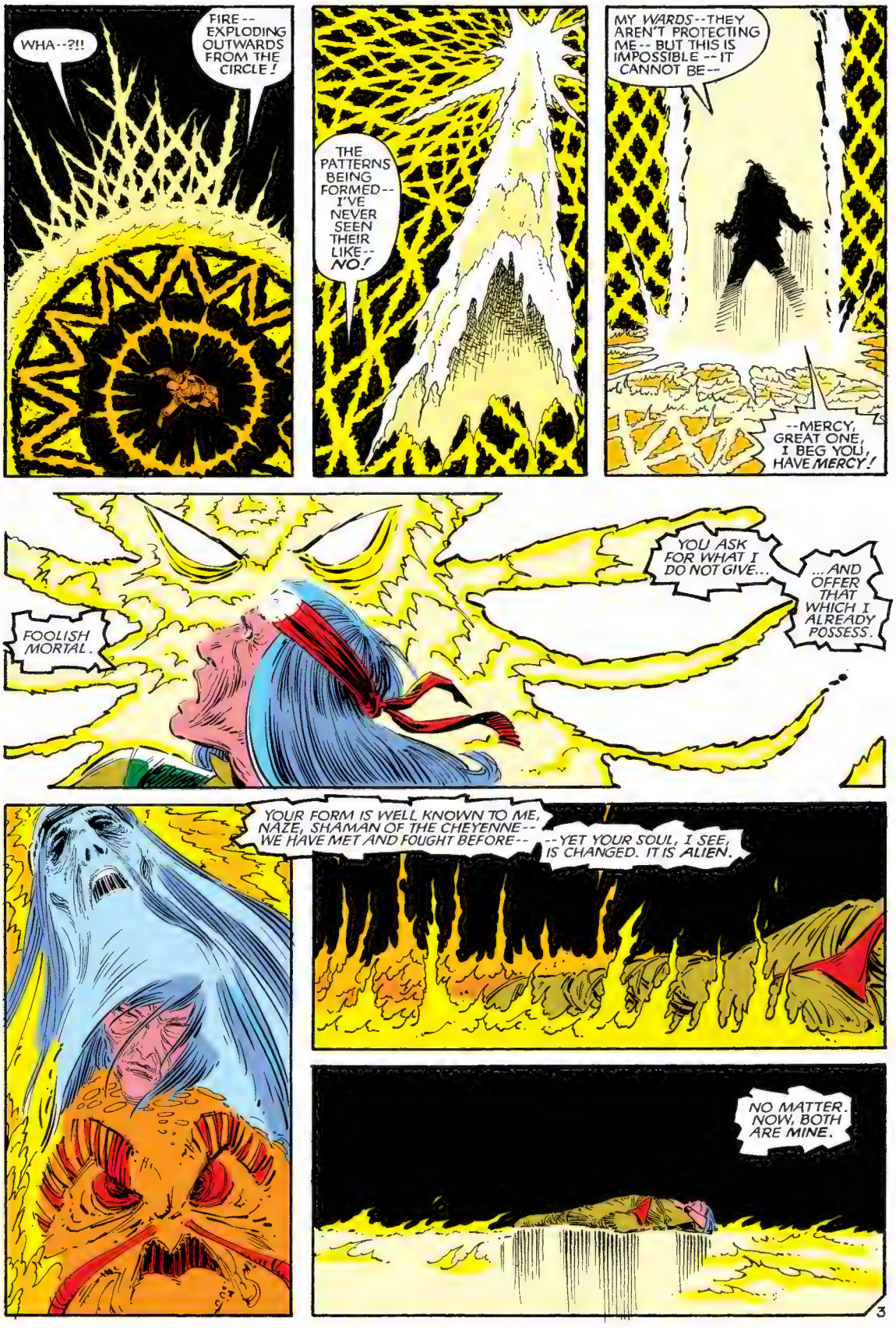
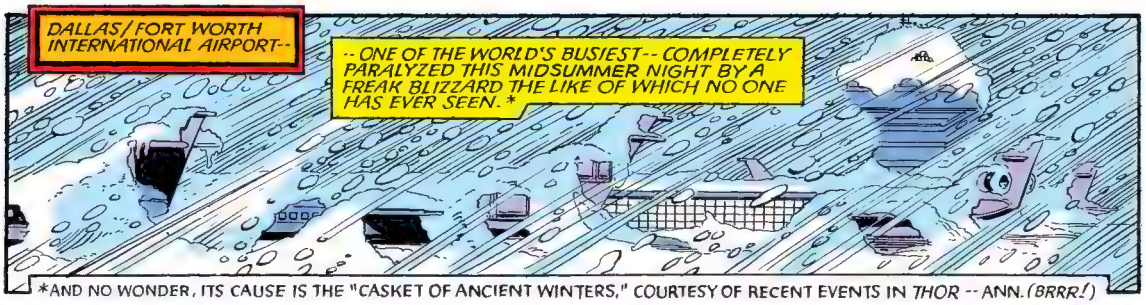
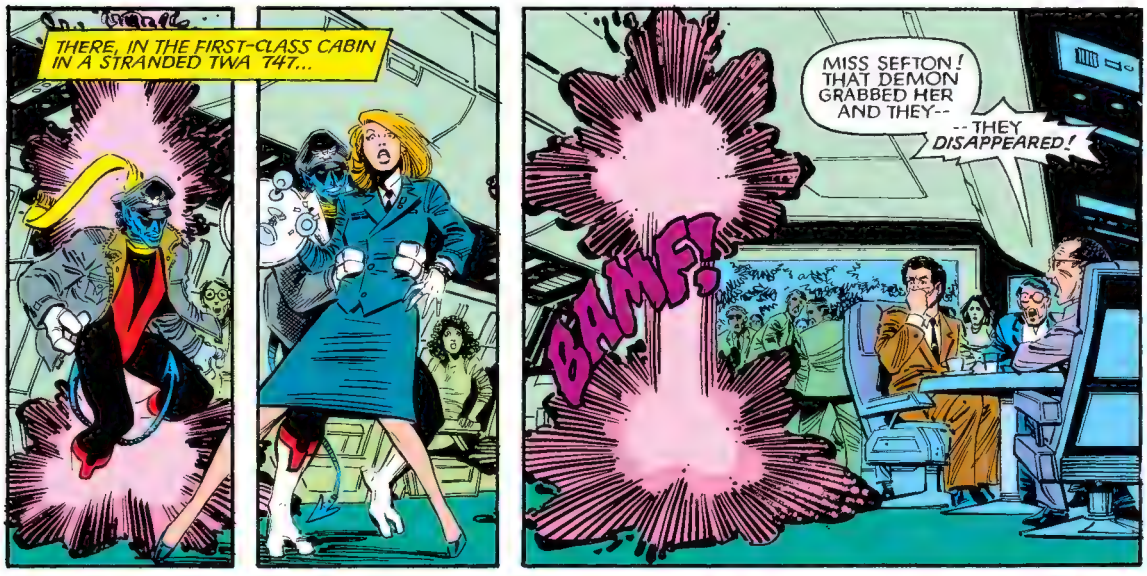
X-MEN

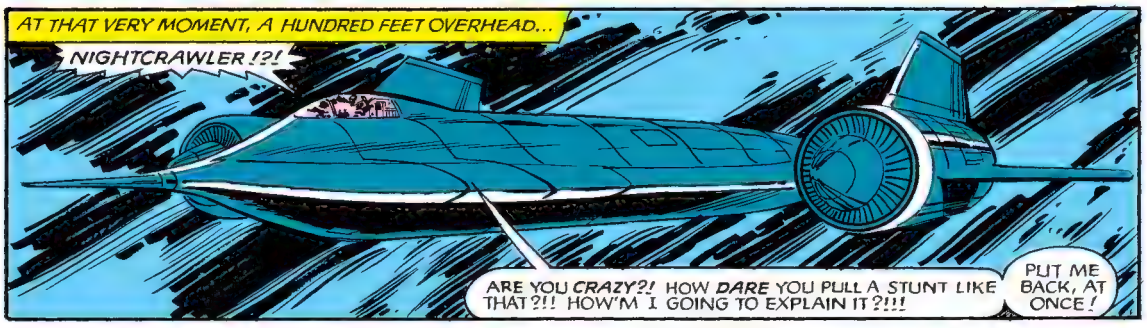
STAN LEE PRESENTS
LEGACY OF THE LOST
HOW QUICKLY SOMETIMES THE TABLES CAN BE TURNED.
A MOMENT AGO, THE X-MEN BELIEVED THIS BATTLE WON, THEIR FOES-- A CADRE OF ALIEN DIRE WRAITHS-- UTTERLY DESTROYED. NOW, IT IS THEY WHO STAND IN DEADLY PERIL, AS WITHOUT WARNING, LOATHSOME SHADOWBEINGS ERUPT THROUGH A RIFT IN THE VERY FABRIC OF SPACE ITSELF, TO OVERWHELM OUR HEROES AND BEGIN TO DRAG THEM INEXORABLY TOWARDS THE DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY LEADING TO THEIR OWN SORCEROUS REALM.
CHRIS CLAREMONT, WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, Jr. & DAN GREEN
ARTISTS
GLYNIS WEIN colorist
TOM ORZECHOWSKI letterer
ANN NOCENTI, EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

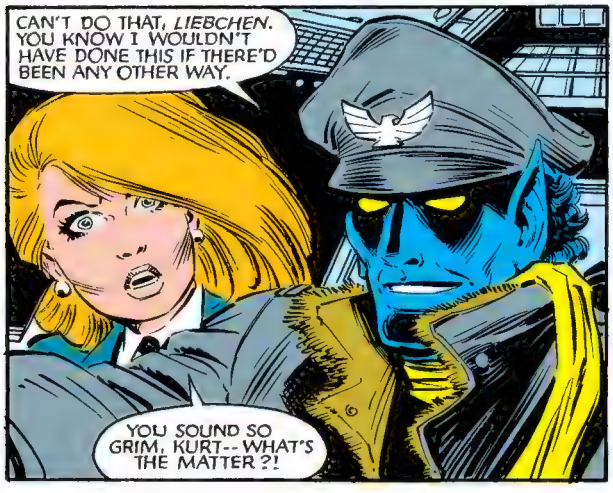

OUR WEAPONS-- OUR FISTS-- HAVE NO EFFECT ON THESE CREATURES.
THEY DON'T SEEM TO POSSESS PHYSICAL SUBSTANCE.
STORM, USE YOUR BLASTER ON MY ARTIFICIAL LEG. IF I CAN GET FREE, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND A WAY TO HELP US ALL!
THE SHADOWBEINGS SEEM TO SENSE MY INTENT, THEY ARE TRYING TO STOP ME!
CAREFUL, WOMAN! YOU ALMOST HIT ME!
IF I DO-- WHEN I DO-- REST ASSURED, FORGE, IT SHALL NOT BE BY ACCIDENT.
SHE MEANS THAT.
PAL, WHEN YOU MAKE YOURSELF AN ENEMY, YOU DON'T FOOL AROUND.
CONSIDERING WHAT I DID TO HER, THOUGH, IT'S PROBABLY NO LESS THAN WHAT I DESERVE.
WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER. STORM'S GIVEN YOU A CHANCE. DON'T BLOW IT!
I GET THE SAME EMANATIONS OFF THESE SHADOWBEINGS AS I DID OFF THE WRAITHS--THEY MUST BE MYSTICAL IN NATURE. THEY MERGE THEIR SUBSTANCE WITH OUR FLESH, TURNING US INTO CREATURES LIKE THEMSELVES.
THEY DIDN'T AFFECT ME AS MUCH AS THE OTHERS BECAUSE OF MY METAL PROSTHESIS. DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I HAVE BEFORE THE PROCESS BECOMES IRREVERSIBLE-- I MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE!
NAZE!
ANSWER ME, OLD MAN, THIS IS NO TIME FOR YOUR IDIOT GAMES. WHERE THE DEVIL ARE YOU, SHAMAN?! I NEED YOU! NAZE?!!
HOWEVER, UPSTAIRS, AT THE VERY APEX OF FORGE'S PENTHOUSE COMPLEX, IN THE CENTER OF A SACRED RING...
HEAR ME, GREAT ONE!
I COME IN HUMBLE SUPPLICATION-- AID MY PEOPLE IN THE HOUR OF OUR GREATEST PERIL.
IN EXCHANGE, WE OFFER THIS WORLD AND ALL ON IT!
--TO DO WITH AS YOU WILL.

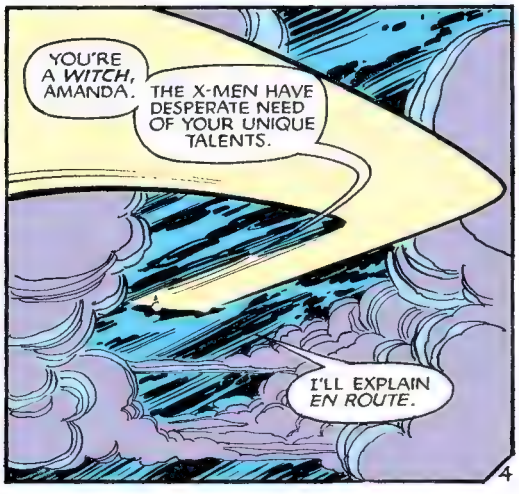

WHA--?!!
FIRE--EXPLODING OUTWARDS FROM THE CIRCLE!
THE PATTERNS BEING FORMED--I'VE NEVER SEEN THEIR LIKE--NO!
MY WARDS--THEY AREN'T PROTECTING ME--BUT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE--IT CANNOT BE--
--MERCY, GREAT ONE, I BEG YOU, HAVE MERCY!
FOOLISH MORTAL.
YOU ASK FOR WHAT I DO NOT GIVE...
...AND OFFER THAT WHICH I ALREADY POSSESS.
YOUR FORM IS WELL KNOWN TO ME, NAZE, SHAMAN OF THE CHEYENNE--WE HAVE MET AND FOUGHT BEFORE--
--YET YOUR SOUL, I SEE, IS CHANGED. IT IS ALIEN.
NO MATTER. NOW, BOTH ARE MINE.


DALLAS/FORT WORTH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT--
-- ONE OF THE WORLD'S BUSIEST-- COMPLETELY PARALYZED THIS MIDSUMMER NIGHT BY A FREAK BLIZZARD THE LIKE OF WHICH NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN.*
*AND NO WONDER, ITS CAUSE IS THE "CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS," COURTESY OF RECENT EVENTS IN THOR -- ANN. (BRRR!)

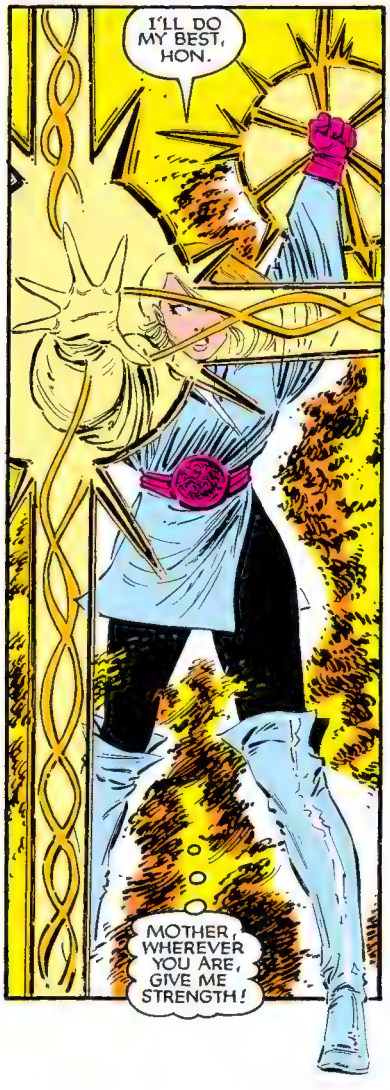

THERE, IN THE FIRST-CLASS CABIN IN A STRANDED TWA 747...
MISS SEFTON! THAT DEMON GRABBED HER AND THEY--
-- THEY DISAPPEARED!
BAMF!

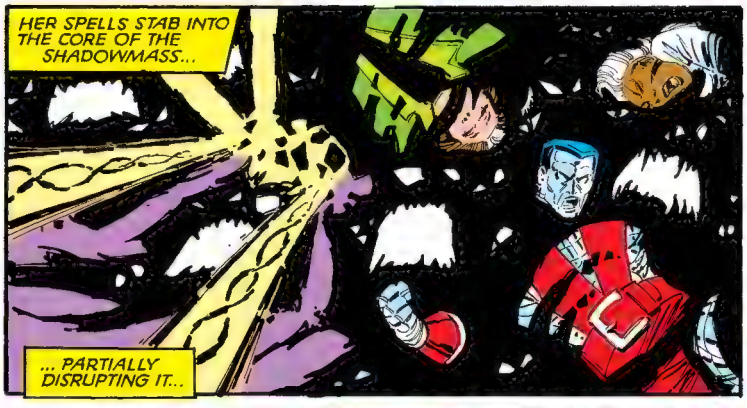

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A HUNDRED FEET OVERHEAD...
NIGHTCRAWLER!?!
ARE YOU CRAZY?! HOW DARE YOU PULL A STUNT LIKE THAT?!! HOW'M I GOING TO EXPLAIN IT?!!!
PUT ME BACK, AT ONCE!


CAN'T DO THAT, LIEBCHEN. YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS IF THERE'D BEEN ANY OTHER WAY.
YOU SOUND SO GRIM, KURT-- WHAT'S THE MATTER?!


YOU'RE A WITCH, AMANDA.
THE X-MEN HAVE DESPERATE NEED OF YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS.
I'LL EXPLAIN EN ROUTE.

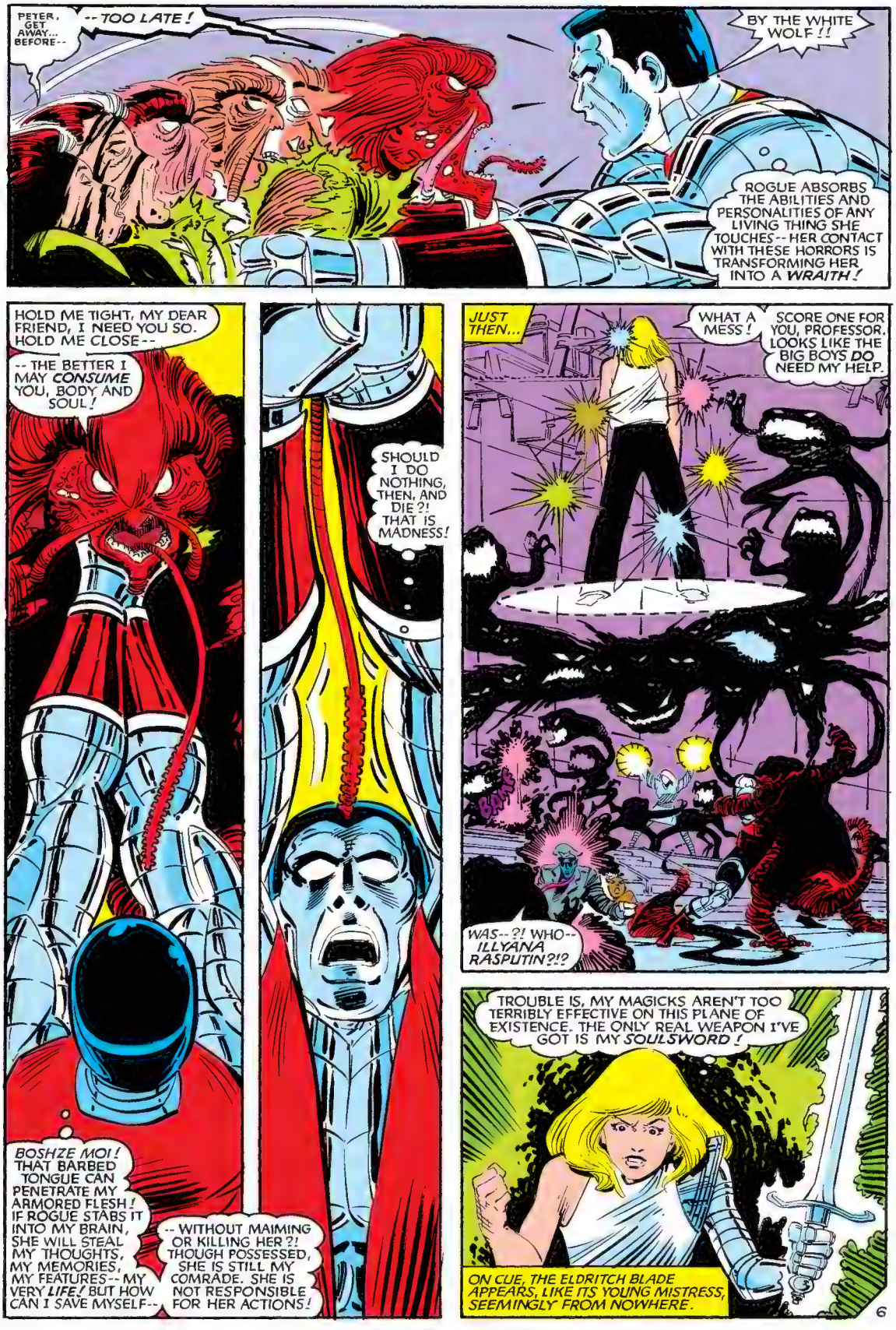
AFTER PROGRAMMING THE X-MEN'S SPECIALLY MODIFIED SR-71 BLACKBIRD AIRCRAFT TO HOVER SAFELY ABOVE EAGLE PLAZA...
...THE GERMAN-BORN MUTANT TELEPORTS HIS LADY-LOVE INTO FORGE'S PENTHOUSE.
THE SIGHT THAT GREETS THEM ISN'T PRETTY.
ZUM TUEFUL--!
SAVE THEM, AMANDA, IF YOU CAN!

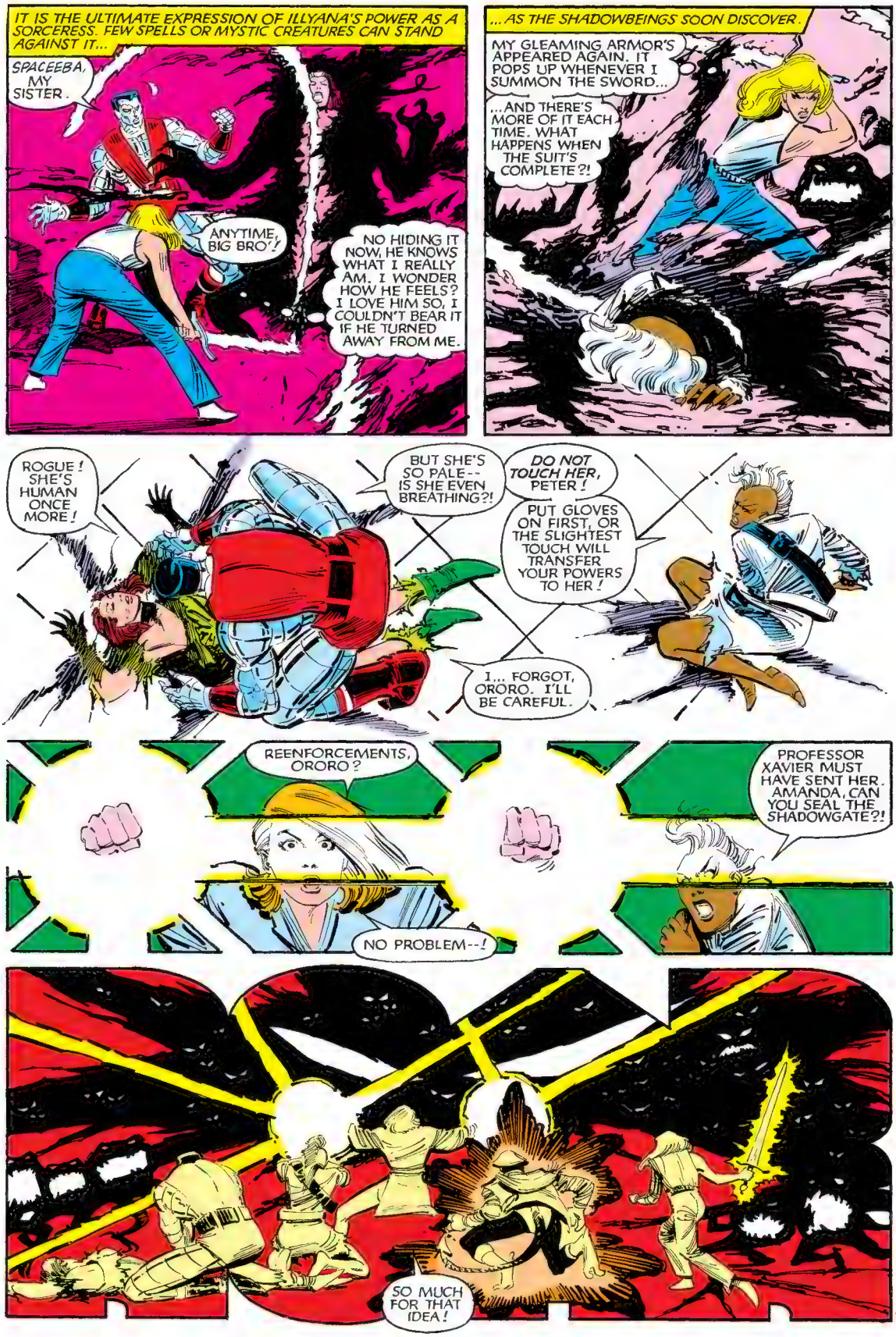

I'LL DO MY BEST, HON.
MOTHER, WHEREVER YOU ARE, GIVE ME STRENGTH!

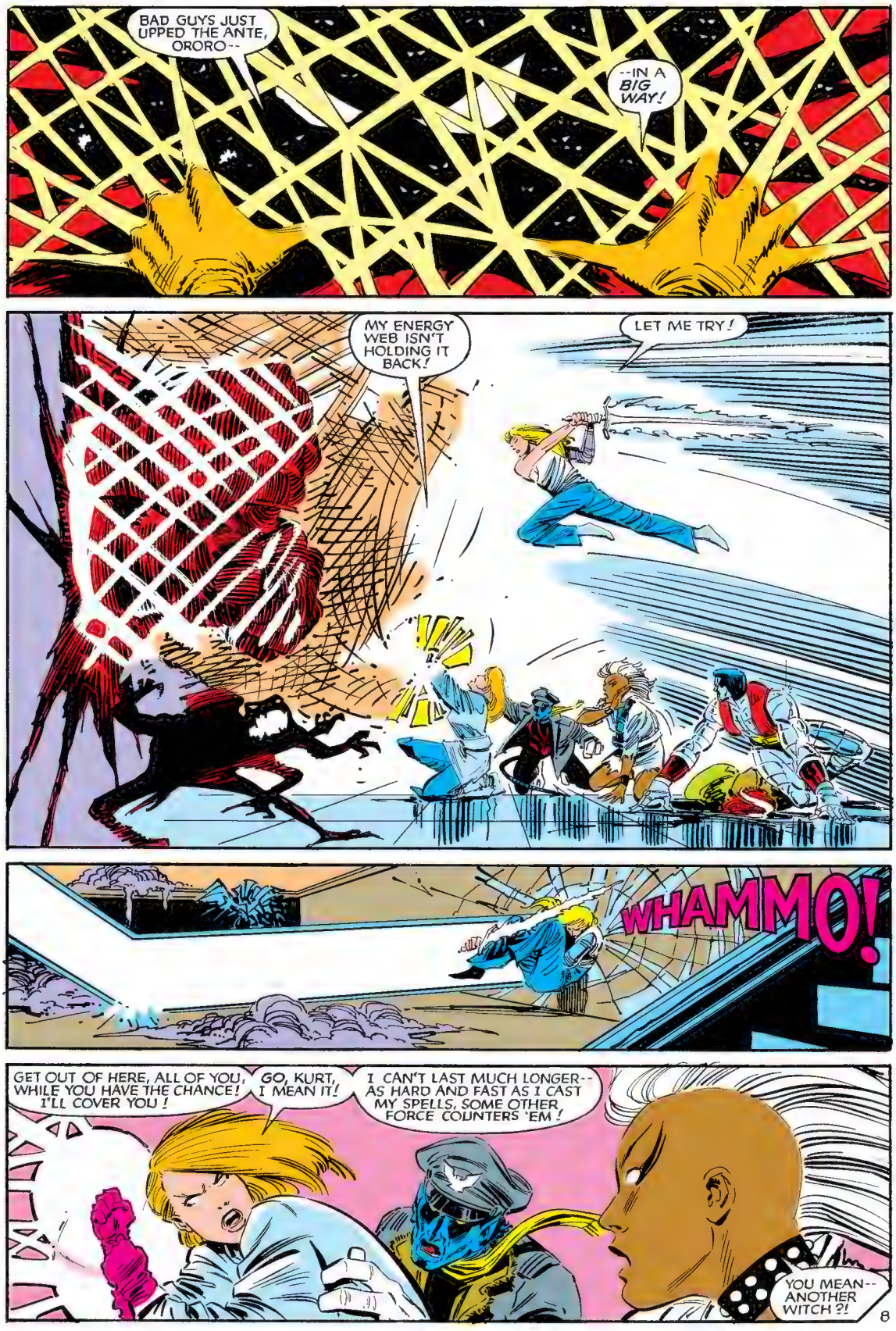

HER SPELLS STAB INTO THE CORE OF THE SHADOWMASS...
...PARTIALLY DISRUPTING IT...

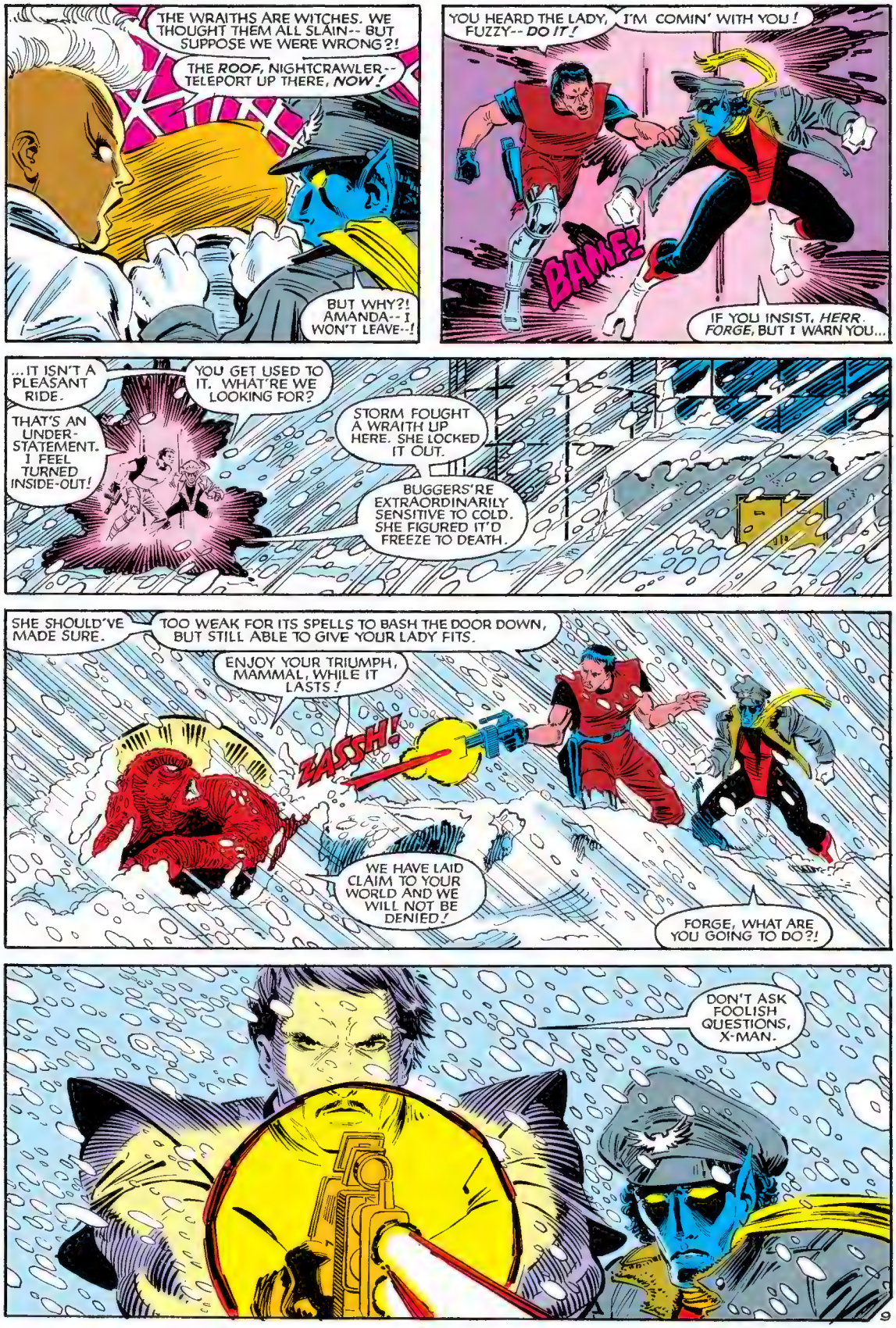
...AND ALLOWING SOME OF THE X-MEN TO STRUGGLE FREE.

NOT EVEN THE... BROOD WERE SO FOUL AND... EVIL!
I AM WEAK-- BUT ORORO AND... ROGUE LOOK FAR WORSE. I MUST SEE TO THEM!


PETER, GET AWAY... BEFORE--
--TOO LATE!
BY THE WHITE WOLF!!
ROGUE ABSORBS THE ABILITIES AND PERSONALITIES OF ANY LIVING THING SHE TOUCHES--HER CONTACT WITH THESE HORRORS IS TRANSFORMING HER INTO A WRAITH!
HOLD ME TIGHT, MY DEAR FRIEND, I NEED YOU SO. HOLD ME CLOSE--
--THE BETTER I MAY CONSUME YOU, BODY AND SOUL!
SHOULD I DO NOTHING, THEN, AND DIE?! THAT IS MADNESS!
BOSHZE MOI! THAT BARBED TONGUE CAN PENETRATE MY ARMORED FLESH! IF ROGUE STABS IT INTO MY BRAIN, SHE WILL STEAL MY THOUGHTS, MY MEMORIES, MY FEATURES--MY VERY LIFE! BUT HOW CAN I SAVE MYSELF--
--WITHOUT MAIMING OR KILLING HER?! THOUGH POSSESSED, SHE IS STILL MY COMRADE. SHE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HER ACTIONS!
JUST THEN...
WHAT A MESS!
SCORE ONE FOR YOU, PROFESSOR. LOOKS LIKE THE BIG BOYS DO NEED MY HELP.
BAM!
WAS--?! WHO--ILLYANA RASPUTIN?!?
TROUBLE IS, MY MAGICKS AREN'T TOO TERRIBLY EFFECTIVE ON THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE. THE ONLY REAL WEAPON I'VE GOT IS MY SOULSWORD!
ON CUE, THE ELDRITCH BLADE APPEARS, LIKE ITS YOUNG MISTRESS, SEEMINGLY FROM NOWHERE.

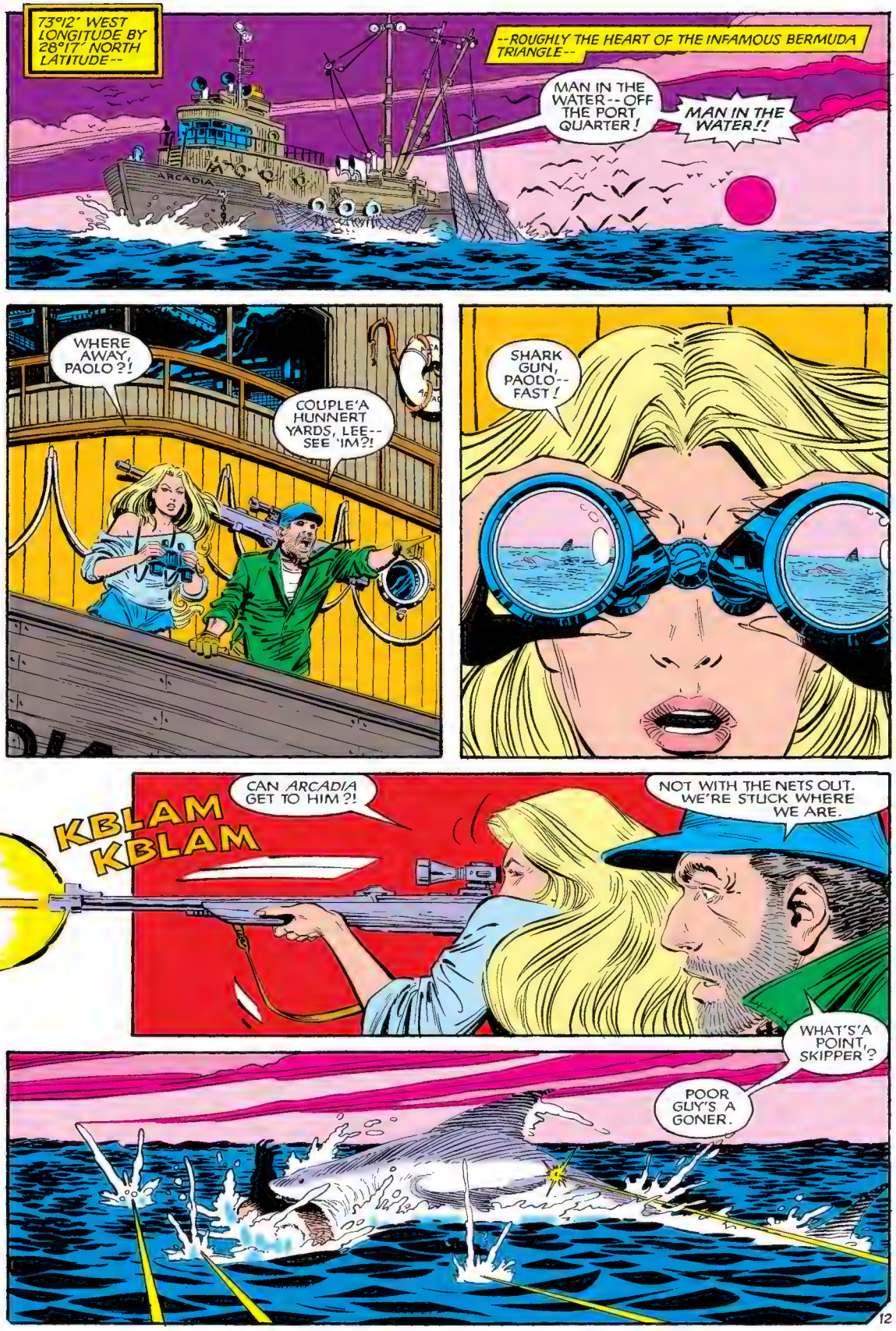

IT IS THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF ILLYANA'S POWER AS A SORCERESS. FEW SPELLS OR MYSTIC CREATURES CAN STAND AGAINST IT...
SPACEEBA, MY SISTER.
ANYTIME, BIG BRO'!
NO HIDING IT NOW, HE KNOWS WHAT I REALLY AM. I WONDER HOW HE FEELS? I LOVE HIM SO, I COULDN'T BEAR IT IF HE TURNED AWAY FROM ME.
...AS THE SHADOWBEINGS SOON DISCOVER.
MY GLEAMING ARMOR'S APPEARED AGAIN. IT POPS UP WHENEVER I SUMMON THE SWORD...
...AND THERE'S MORE OF IT EACH TIME. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SUIT'S COMPLETE?!
ROGUE! SHE'S HUMAN ONCE MORE!
BUT SHE'S SO PALE--- IS SHE EVEN BREATHING?!
DO NOT TOUCH HER, PETER!
PUT GLOVES ON FIRST, OR THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH WILL TRANSFER YOUR POWERS TO HER!
I... FORGOT, ORORO. I'LL BE CAREFUL.
REENFORCEMENTS, ORORO?
NO PROBLEM--!
PROFESSOR XAVIER MUST HAVE SENT HER. AMANDA, CAN YOU SEAL THE SHADOWGATE?!
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA!

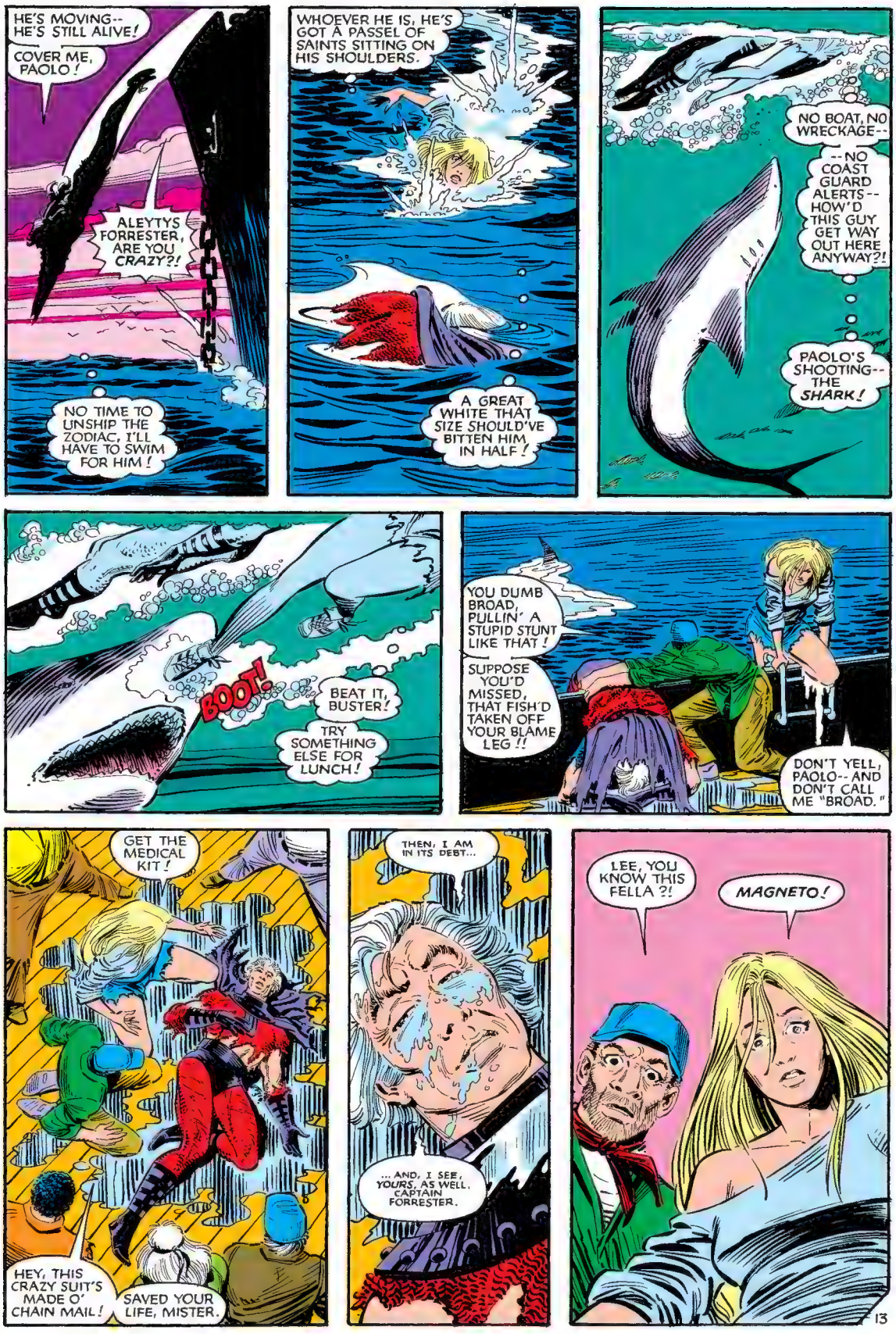

BAD GUYS JUST UPPED THE ANTE, ORORO--
--IN A BIG WAY!
MY ENERGY WEB ISN'T HOLDING IT BACK!
LET ME TRY!
WHAMMO!
GET OUT OF HERE, ALL OF YOU, WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE! I'LL COVER YOU!
GO, KURT, I MEAN IT!
I CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER-- AS HARD AND FAST AS I CAST MY SPELLS, SOME OTHER FORCE COUNTERS 'EM!
YOU MEAN-- ANOTHER WITCH?!


THE WRAITHS ARE WITCHES. WE THOUGHT THEM ALL SLAIN-- BUT SUPPOSE WE WERE WRONG?!
THE ROOF, NIGHTCRAWLER-- TELEPORT UP THERE, NOW!
BUT WHY?! AMANDA-- I WON'T LEAVE--!
YOU HEARD THE LADY, FUZZY-- DO IT!
I'M COMIN' WITH YOU!
BAMF!
IF YOU INSIST, HERR FORGE, BUT I WARN YOU...
...IT ISN'T A PLEASANT RIDE.
THAT'S AN UNDER-STATEMENT. I FEEL TURNED INSIDE-OUT!
YOU GET USED TO IT. WHAT'RE WE LOOKING FOR?
STORM FOUGHT A WRAITH UP HERE. SHE LOCKED IT OUT.
BUGGERS'RE EXTRAORDINARILY SENSITIVE TO COLD. SHE FIGURED IT'D FREEZE TO DEATH.
SHE SHOULD'VE MADE SURE.
TOO WEAK FOR ITS SPELLS TO BASH THE DOOR DOWN, BUT STILL ABLE TO GIVE YOUR LADY FITS.
ENJOY YOUR TRIUMPH, MAMMAL, WHILE IT LASTS!
ZASSH!
WE HAVE LAID CLAIM TO YOUR WORLD AND WE WILL NOT BE DENIED!
FORGE, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!
DON'T ASK FOOLISH QUESTIONS, X-MAN.

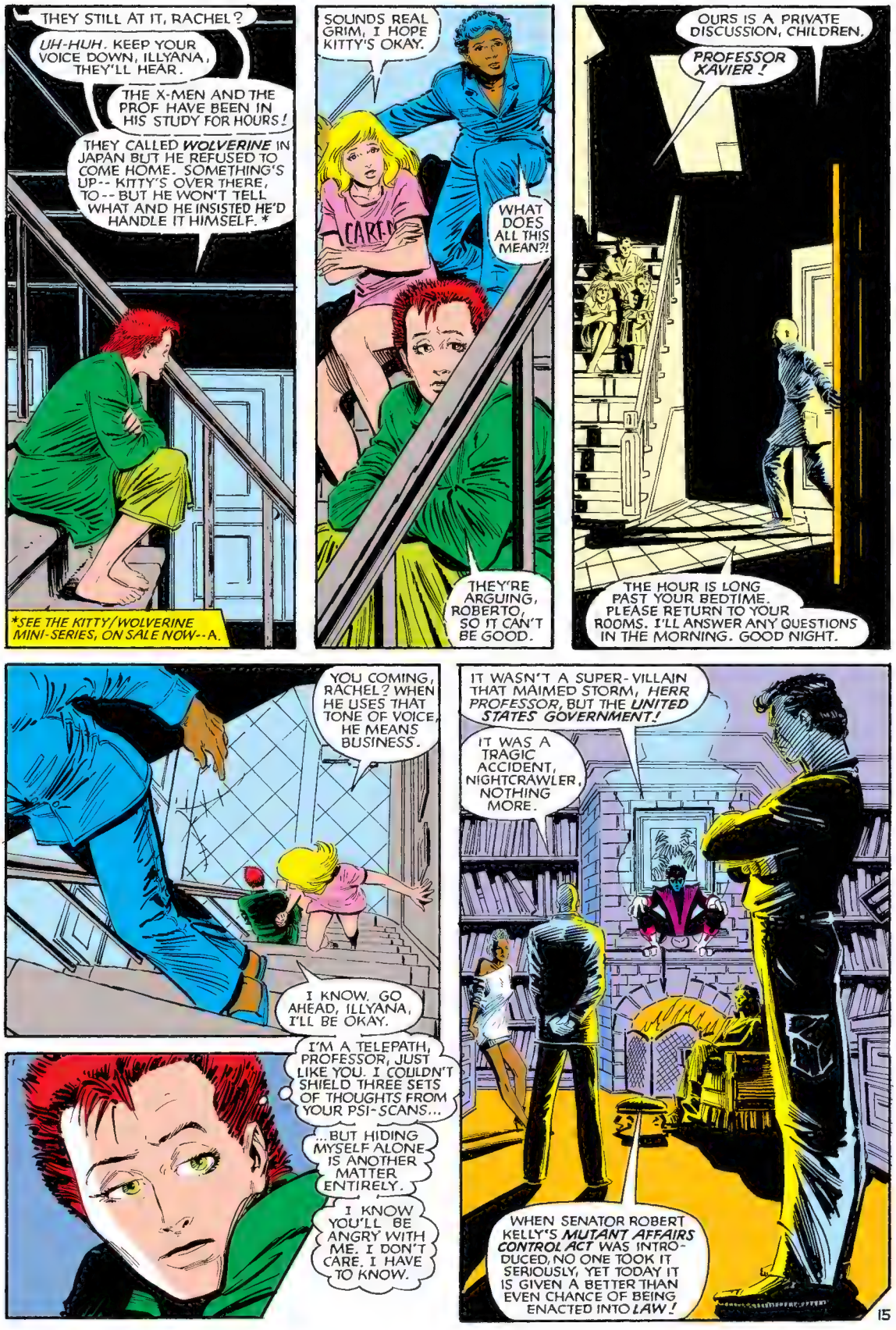
TCHAAA-- BE A WHILE BEFORE THIS PLACE IS LIVEABLE.
SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU, MISTER?
AT LEAST YOU'RE AROUND TO FIX IT, MEIN HERR.
CONSIDER ME... SQUEAMISH. KILLING DOES NOT COME AS NATURALLY TO ME AS TO... OTHERS-- EXCUSE ME, PLEASE, I MUST SEE TO MY FRIENDS.
REST, HON, LET MY MAGICKS EASE YOUR PAIN.
PROFESSOR XAVIER WAS MONITORING YOUR SITUATION OVER THE BLACKBIRD'S COMLINK-- OH, ORORO, IS IT TRUE WHAT WE'VE HEARD, THAT YOU'VE LOST YOUR POWERS?!
YES.
I'M SO SORRY!
I, TOO. BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
I'M A TELEPORTER, KIND OF LIKE NIGHTCRAWLER--THAT'S MY MUTANT POWER-- BUT I'M ALSO A SORCERESS. THE PROF HOPED MY SOULSWORD WOULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. I'M GLAD IT DID.
A SORCERESS-- I KNEW YOU HAD CHANGED IN LIMBO, ILLYANA NIKOLOVNA, WHEN YOU WERE BELASCO'S CAPTIVE, BUT I NEVER REALIZED QUITE HOW MUCH.
I WAS MORE THAN THE DEMON-LORD'S CAPTIVE, PETER.
I BECAME HIS APPRENTICE.
WHATEVER YOU WERE, YOU ARE-- YOU WILL FOREVER REMAIN--MY SISTER!
AND, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE, A BRAVER, TRUER, LOVELIER GIRL DOES NOT EXIST ON THIS PLANET--OR ANY OTHER!
NAZÉ?!?

I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED.
WHAT DID YOU DO, OLD MAN, TRY TO SUMMON THE GREAT SPIRIT HIMSELF?!!
WHY DID I EVER BUILD THIS BLOODY SANCTUM IN THE FIRST PLACE-- DIDN'T I LEARN MY LESSON IN 'NAM?! NO MORE MAGIC--EVER!
HOW IS HE?
ALIVE--BARELY. I'VE GOT TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.
I WISH HIM WELL. WE SHALL BE GONE WHEN YOU RETURN.
NO! I WON'T LET THINGS END LIKE THIS BETWEEN US!
AND HOW, PRAY TELL, O MASTER OF LIES, WILL YOU STOP ME?
ORORO, PLEASE!
DO NOT FOLLOW, FORGE, DO NOT TRY TO FIND US. SUGGEST TO YOUR FEDERAL ASSOCIATES THAT THEY DO THE SAME.
CHEER UP, WARRIOR, OUR STORY IS FAR FROM ENDED. WE SHALL MEET AGAIN.
AND THEN?
YOU MAY WELL WISH WE HAD NOT.

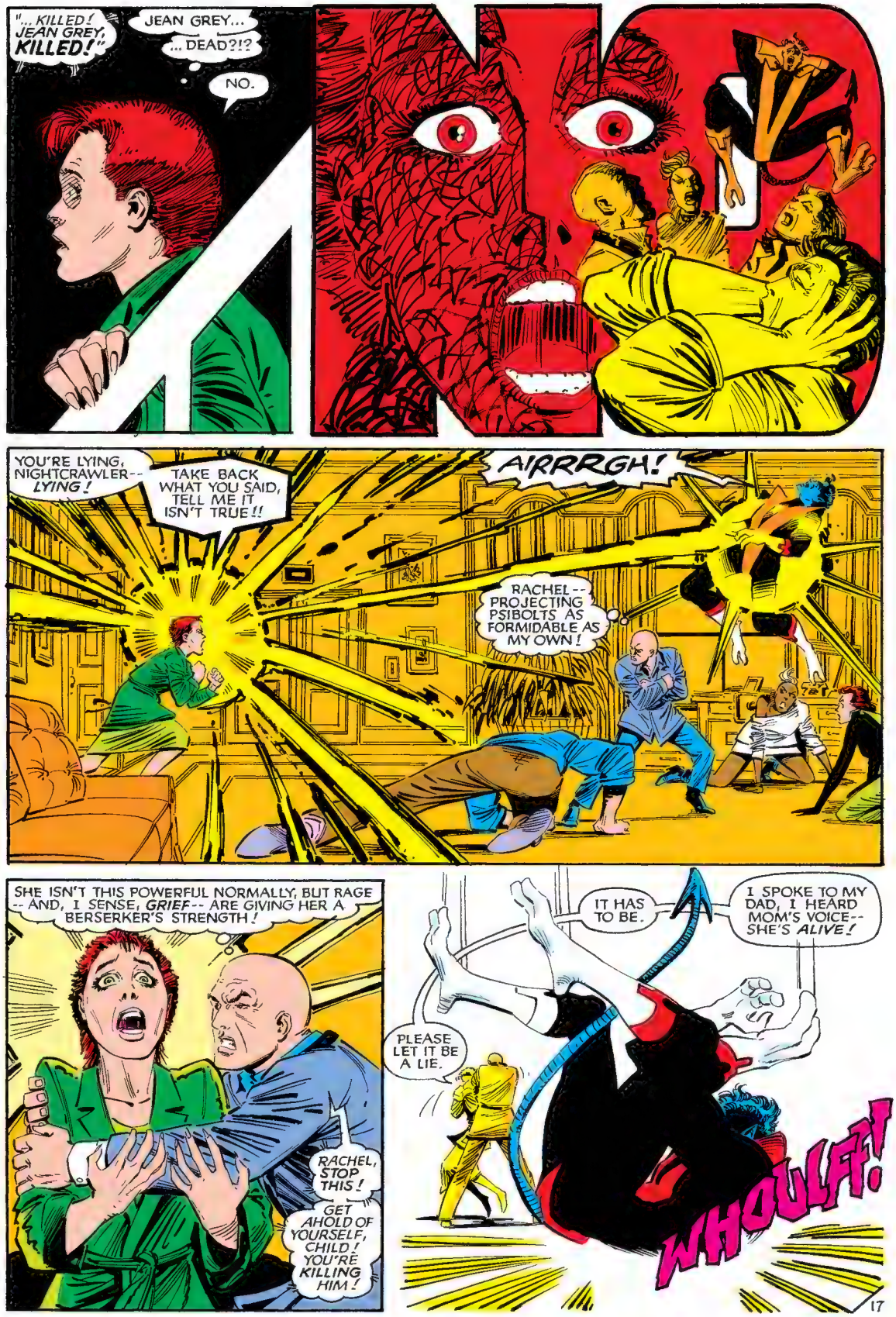

73°12' WEST LONGITUDE BY 28°17' NORTH LATITUDE--
--ROUGHLY THE HEART OF THE INFAMOUS BERMUDA TRIANGLE--
MAN IN THE WATER--OFF THE PORT QUARTER!
MAN IN THE WATER!!
ARCADIA
WHERE AWAY, PAOLO?!
COUPLE'A HUNNERT YARDS, LEE--SEE 'IM?!
SHARK GUN, PAOLO--FAST!
KBLAM KBLAM
CAN ARCADIA GET TO HIM?!
NOT WITH THE NETS OUT. WE'RE STUCK WHERE WE ARE.
WHAT'S'A POINT, SKIPPER?
POOR GUY'S A GONER.

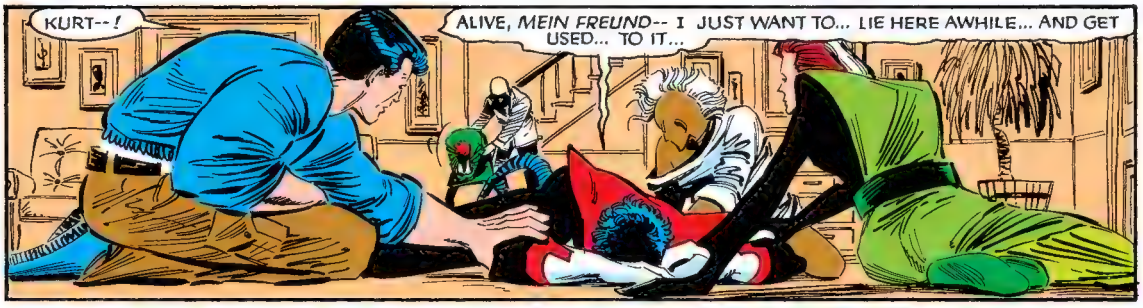

HE'S MOVING-- HE'S STILL ALIVE!
COVER ME, PAOLO!
ALEYTYS FORRESTER, ARE YOU CRAZY?!
NO TIME TO UNSHIP THE ZODIAC, I'LL HAVE TO SWIM FOR HIM!
WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S GOT A PASSEL OF SAINTS SITTING ON HIS SHOULDERS.
A GREAT WHITE THAT SIZE SHOULD'VE BITTEN HIM IN HALF!
NO BOAT, NO WRECKAGE--
--NO COAST GUARD ALERTS-- HOW'D THIS GUY GET WAY OUT HERE ANYWAY?!
PAOLO'S SHOOTING-- THE SHARK!
BOOT!
BEAT IT, BUSTER!
TRY SOMETHING ELSE FOR LUNCH!
YOU DUMB BROAD, PULLIN' A STUPID STUNT LIKE THAT!
SUPPOSE YOU'D MISSED, THAT FISH'D TAKEN OFF YOUR BLAME LEG!!
DON'T YELL, PAOLO-- AND DON'T CALL ME "BROAD."
GET THE MEDICAL KIT!
HEY, THIS CRAZY SUIT'S MADE O' CHAIN MAIL!
SAVED YOUR LIFE, MISTER.
THEN, I AM IN ITS DEBT...
... AND, I SEE, YOURS, AS WELL, CAPTAIN FORRESTER.
LEE, YOU KNOW THIS FELLA?!
MAGNETO!

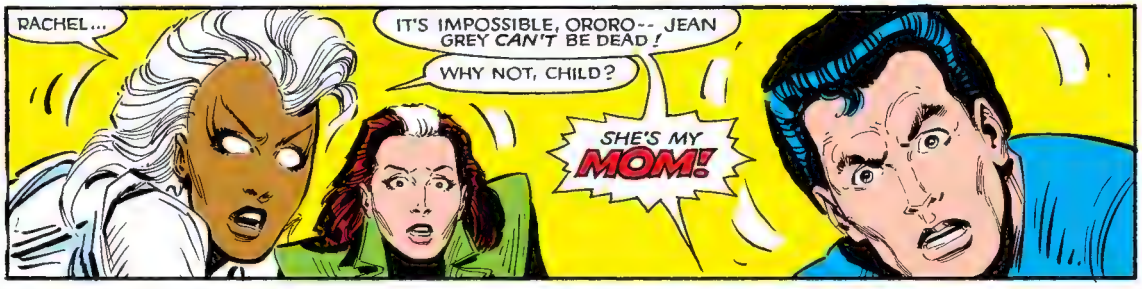
73°35' WEST LONGITUDE BY 41°20' NORTH LATITUDE--
--OR, ROUGHLY 1300 MILES DUE NORTH OF THE TRAWLER, ARCADIA...
JOIN ME FOR A SWIM, KURT?
I'LL PASS, DANKE, ORORO.
WATER AND FUR DON'T MIX.
PITY.
THE NIGHT IS TURNING CHILL.
HERE'S YOUR TOWEL.
BLESS YOU! I AM STILL NOT USED TO FEELING COLD.
THE PROFESSOR SAYS YOUR POWERS ARE COMPLETELY GONE.
AS IF THEY HAD NEVER BEEN. THE GENETIC POTENTIAL EXISTS. MY CHILDREN--OR THEIRS--MAY SOMEDAY COMMAND THE WEATHER, AS I DID.
BUT NOT I.
THIS IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, MY DARLING ELF, OR EVEN OF MINE. I AM A GROWN WOMAN. I HAVE SURVIVED...
...I WILL SURVIVE.
ORORO, I ASKED THE PROFESSOR TO CALL A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE X-MEN.
SO?
I AM NO LONGER A MUTANT. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY PLACE FOR ME HERE.
PERHAPS NOT FOR ANY OF US.
DO IT AS A FAVOR TO ME, THEN. I NEED YOU BY MY SIDE, THIS LAST TIME MORE THAN EVER!


THEY STILL AT IT, RACHEL?
UH-HUH. KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, ILLYANA, THEY'LL HEAR.
THE X-MEN AND THE PROF HAVE BEEN IN HIS STUDY FOR HOURS!
THEY CALLED WOLVERINE IN JAPAN BUT HE REFUSED TO COME HOME. SOMETHING'S UP-- KITTY'S OVER THERE, TOO-- BUT HE WON'T TELL WHAT AND HE INSISTED HE'D HANDLE IT HIMSELF. *
*SEE THE KITTY/WOLVERINE MINI-SERIES, ON SALE NOW--A.
SOUNDS REAL GRIM, I HOPE KITTY'S OKAY.
CARE!
WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?!
THEY'RE ARGUING, ROBERTO, SO IT CAN'T BE GOOD.
OURS IS A PRIVATE DISCUSSION, CHILDREN.
PROFESSOR XAVIER!
THE HOUR IS LONG PAST YOUR BEDTIME. PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR ROOMS. I'LL ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS IN THE MORNING. GOOD NIGHT.
YOU COMING, RACHEL? WHEN HE USES THAT TONE OF VOICE, HE MEANS BUSINESS.
I KNOW. GO AHEAD, ILLYANA, I'LL BE OKAY.
I'M A TELEPATH, PROFESSOR, JUST LIKE YOU. I COULDN'T SHIELD THREE SETS OF THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PSI-SCANS...
...BUT HIDING MYSELF ALONE IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY.
I KNOW YOU'LL BE ANGRY WITH ME. I DON'T CARE. I HAVE TO KNOW.
IT WASN'T A SUPER-VILLAIN THAT MAIMED STORM, HERR PROFESSOR, BUT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT!
IT WAS A TRAGIC ACCIDENT, NIGHTCRAWLER, NOTHING MORE.
WHEN SENATOR ROBERT KELLY'S MUTANT AFFAIRS CONTROL ACT WAS INTRODUCED, NO ONE TOOK IT SERIOUSLY, YET TODAY IT IS GIVEN A BETTER THAN EVEN CHANCE OF BEING ENACTED INTO LAW!

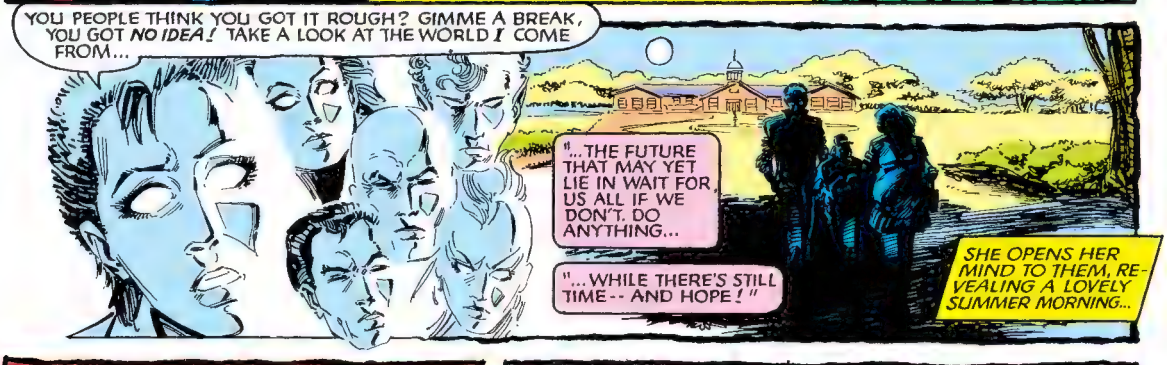
WE LIVE IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 20th CENTURY-- IN AN AGE WHERE MEN HAVE WALKED ON THE MOON AND, SOME OF US, JOURNEYED TO THE STARS! WE HAVE SPLIT THE ATOM, THE SECRETS OF SPACE AND TIME ARE OURS FOR THE ASKING!
YET WHEN YOU FOUND ME-- NOT SO MANY YEARS AGO-- I WAS BEING HUNTED BY A MOB--
--WHO WANTED TO DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH MY HEART BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED I WAS A DEMON!
I HOPED JOINING THE X-MEN WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE, THAT THINGS WOULD GET BETTER FOR MUTANTKIND. INSTEAD, THEY'VE GOTTEN WORSE.
WE ARE STILL HATED, STILL HOUNDED, BY THE VERY PEOPLE WE HAVE SWORN TO PROTECT.
SO I FIND MYSELF ASKING, WHY?! WHAT'S THE POINT?!
WOULD YOU RATHER FOLLOW MAGNETO'S WAY-- BY CONQUERING THE WORLD AND ENSLAVING HUMANITY?!
IN TRUTH, I'D RATHER NOT BE BOTHERED AT ALL.
IF THE WORLD CARES NOTHING FOR MUTANTS, FINE, THE FEELING'S MUTUAL.
WHAT OF THE X-MEN?
WHAT OF US?! FORGIVE ME, BUT WHO NEEDS US, WHAT PURPOSE DO WE SERVE?!
THE SCHOOL, YES, THAT FULFILLS A DESPERATE NEED-- YOUNG MUTANTS MUST BE TAUGHT THE USE OF THEIR POWERS-- BUT AS FOR THE REST, LET THE AVENGERS OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR HANDLE THAT BURDEN.
THEY'RE POPULAR, THEY'RE ACCEPTED. LEAVE US, THEN, TO LIVE IN PEACE.
DO YOU REALLY THINK RUNNING AWAY IS THE ANSWER?!
AT LEAST, I'LL BE LIVING FOR MYSELF-- AND THE WOMAN I LOVE-- INSTEAD OF SOME AMORPHOUS DREAM! DOES THAT SOUND SELFISH?! WELL, I FEEL I'VE EARNED THE RIGHT-- WE ALL HAVE! LOOK AT US, PROFESSOR--
--OF THE X-MEN YOU GATHERED: BANSHEE AND STORM, MAIMED-- THUNDERBIRD, KILLED!
JEAN GREY, KILLED!! WHERE WILL IT END?!

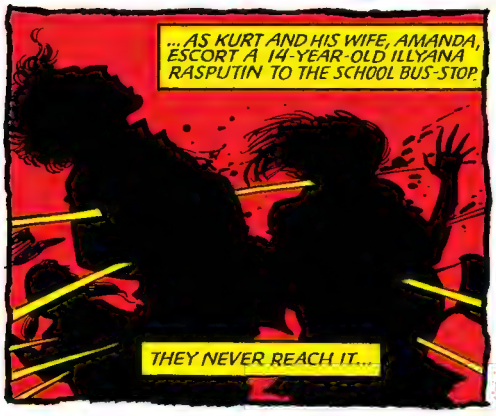

"... KILLED! JEAN GREY, KILLED!"
JEAN GREY... ... DEAD?!?
NO.
YOU'RE LYING, NIGHTCRAWLER-- LYING!
TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID, TELL ME IT ISN'T TRUE!!
AIRRRGH!
RACHEL-- PROJECTING PSIBOLTS AS FORMIDABLE AS MY OWN!
SHE ISN'T THIS POWERFUL NORMALLY, BUT RAGE -- AND, I SENSE, GRIEF-- ARE GIVING HER A BERSERKER'S STRENGTH!
RACHEL, STOP THIS!
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF, CHILD! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!
IT HAS TO BE.
I SPOKE TO MY DAD, I HEARD MOM'S VOICE-- SHE'S ALIVE!
PLEASE LET IT BE A LIE.
WHOULFF!

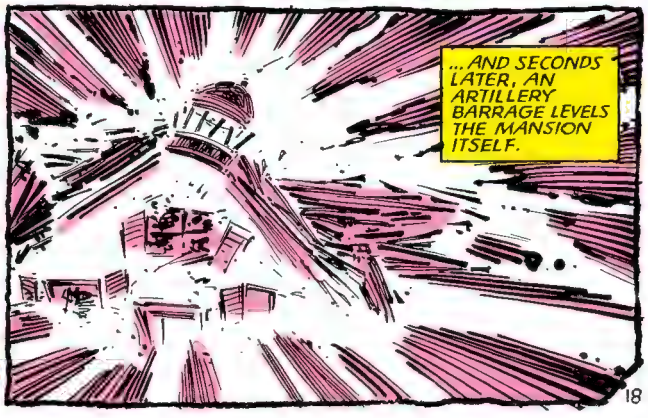

KURT--!
ALIVE, *MEIN FREUND*-- I JUST WANT TO... LIE HERE AWHILE... AND GET USED... TO IT...


RACHEL...
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, ORORO-- JEAN GREY *CAN'T* BE DEAD!
WHY NOT, CHILD?
SHE'S MY MOM!

I'M SO SORRY, NIGHTCRAWLER. I'D NEVER INTENTIONALLY HURT YOU, YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU? I MEAN, YOU'RE MY FAVORITE "FUZZY-ELF," WHO TOLD ME BEDTIME STORIES WHEN I WAS A KID AND TOOK ME TO THE CIRCUS!
OH, REALLY?
SCOUT'S HONOR!
ONLY-- NONE OF THAT HAS HAPPENED YET. I GUESS NOW IT NEVER WILL.
YOU CAN'T GIVE UP. THE X-MEN *ARE* IMPORTANT! NOT BECAUSE YOU'RE SUPER-HEROES, BUT BECAUSE YOU'RE *MUTANT* SUPER-HEROES!


YOU PEOPLE THINK YOU GOT IT ROUGH? GIMME A BREAK, YOU GOT *NO IDEA!* TAKE A LOOK AT THE WORLD *I* COME FROM...
"...THE FUTURE THAT MAY YET LIE IN WAIT FOR US ALL IF WE DON'T DO ANYTHING...
"...WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME-- AND HOPE!"
SHE OPENS HER MIND TO THEM, REVEALING A LOVELY SUMMER MORNING...


...AS KURT AND HIS WIFE, AMANDA, ESCORT A 14-YEAR-OLD ILLYANA RASPUTIN TO THE SCHOOL BUS-STOP.
THEY NEVER REACH IT...

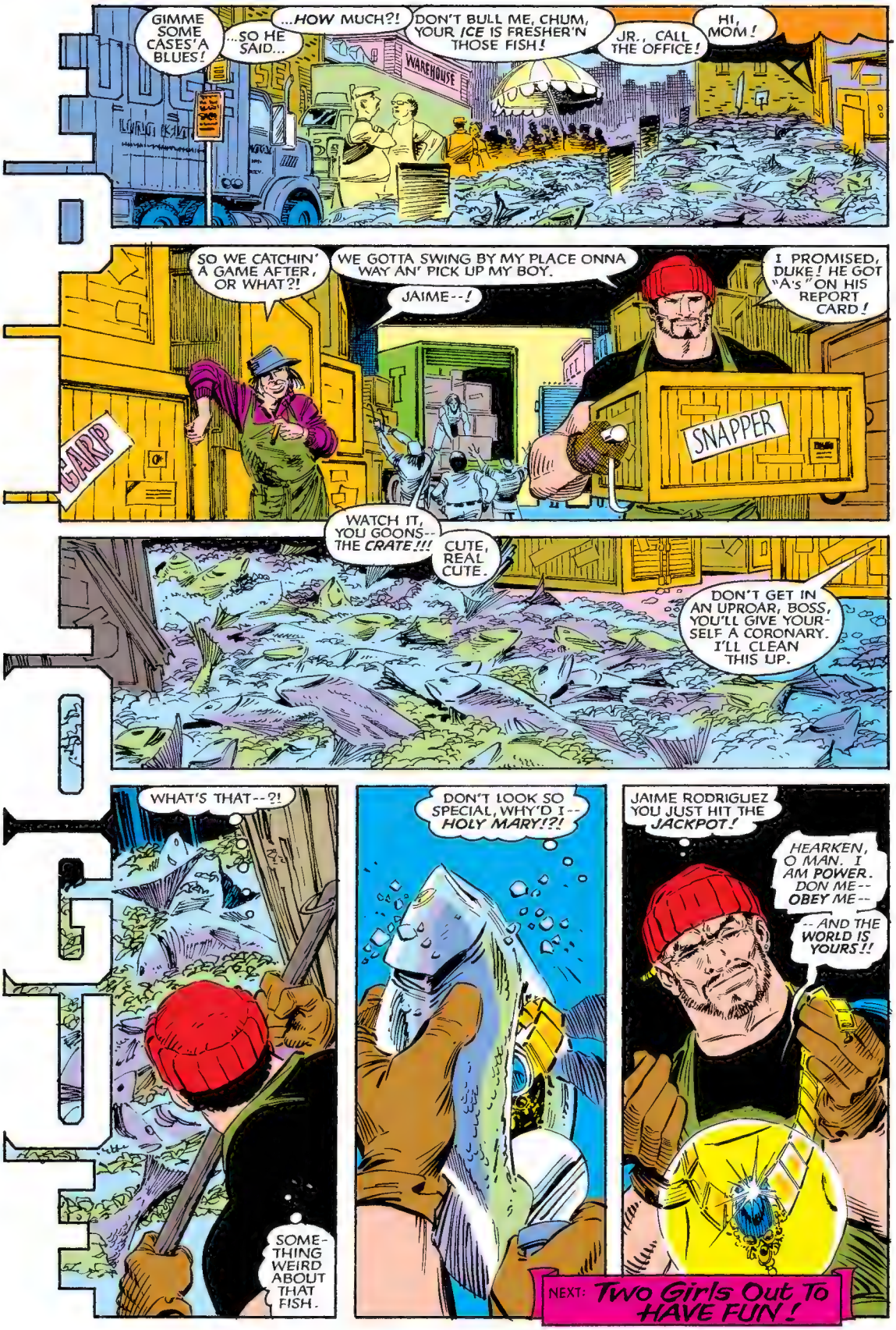

...AND SECONDS LATER, AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE LEVELS THE MANSION ITSELF.

GET DOWNSTAIRS, RACHEL. YOU'LL BE SAFE IN THE DANGER ROOM.
NOT WITHOUT YOU, PROFESSOR!
I CANNOT. I MUST TRY TO STOP THIS SLAUGHTER!
WE MEAN NO HARM! WE SURRENDER!
IN MERCY'S NAME, CEASE FIR--*
"THE SOLDIERS FOUND ME IN THE RUINS, BY HIS SIDE, THE ONLY SURVIVOR.
"THEY USED DRUGS TO NEUTRALIZE MY PSI-TALENT. THE TORTURE CAME LATER, IN PRISON. EVENTUALLY, I WAS SENT TO THE SOUTH BRONX CONTAINMENT FACILITY-- A CONCENTRATION CAMP!
"IN MY PAST, THE ANTI-MUTANT PERSECUTION BEGAN WITH THE ASSASSINATION-- BY MUTANTS-- OF SENATOR ROBERT KELLY.
SOUTH BRONX MUTANT CONTAINMENT FACILITY
"I EXCHANGED THE ADULT KATE PRYDE'S PSYCHE WITH THAT OF HER YOUNGER SELF. SHE SAVED KELLY-- BUT YOU KNOW THAT, YOU GUYS HELPED HER.
"THE REST OF US-- IN THE FUTURE-- WEREN'T SO LUCKY.
"WHEN KATE'S MIND RETURNED TO HER BODY, ONLY I WAS LEFT TO WELCOME HER.*

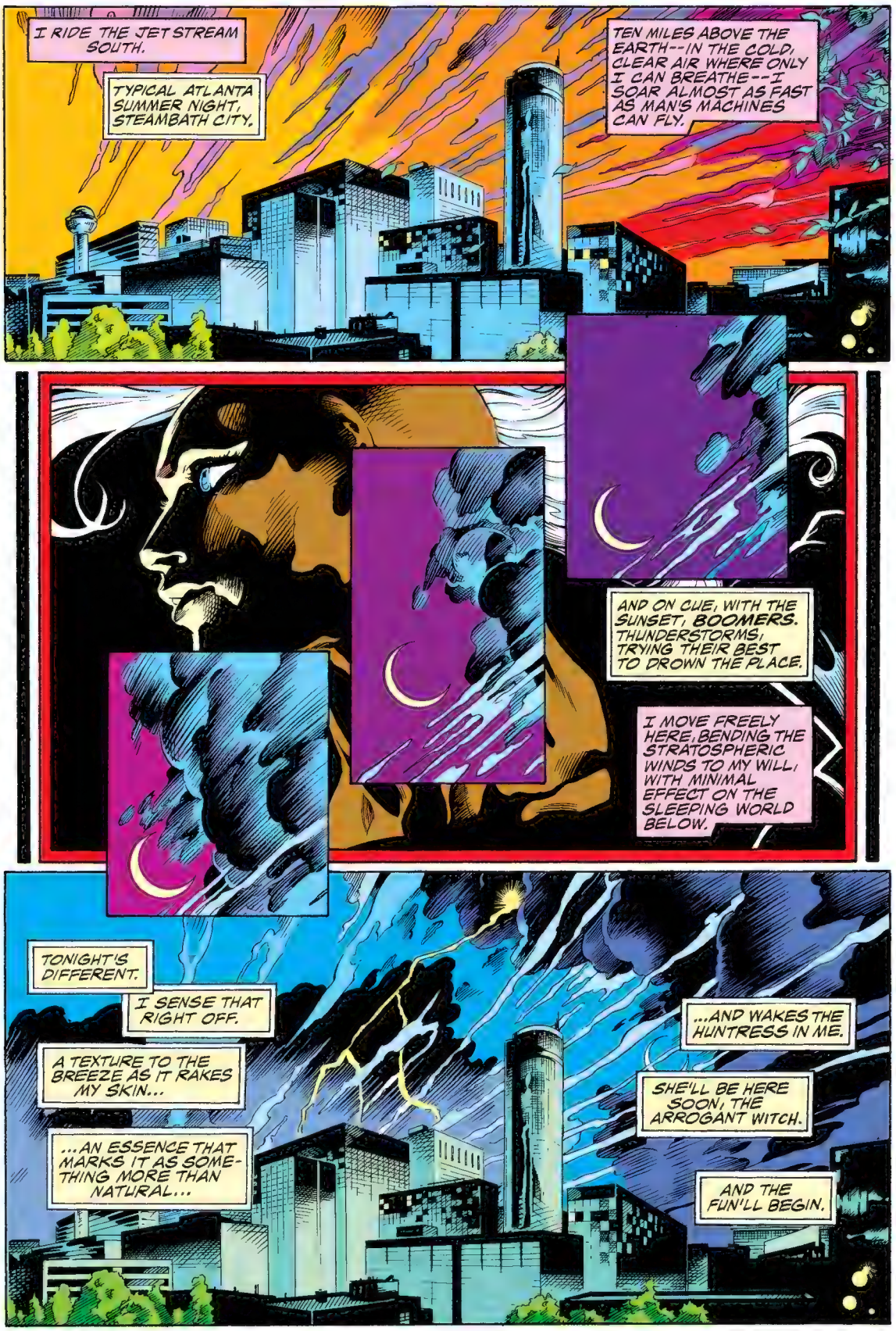
*AN ABBREVIATED RECAP OF THE EVENTS OF X-MEN #'S 141 & 142 --ANN.

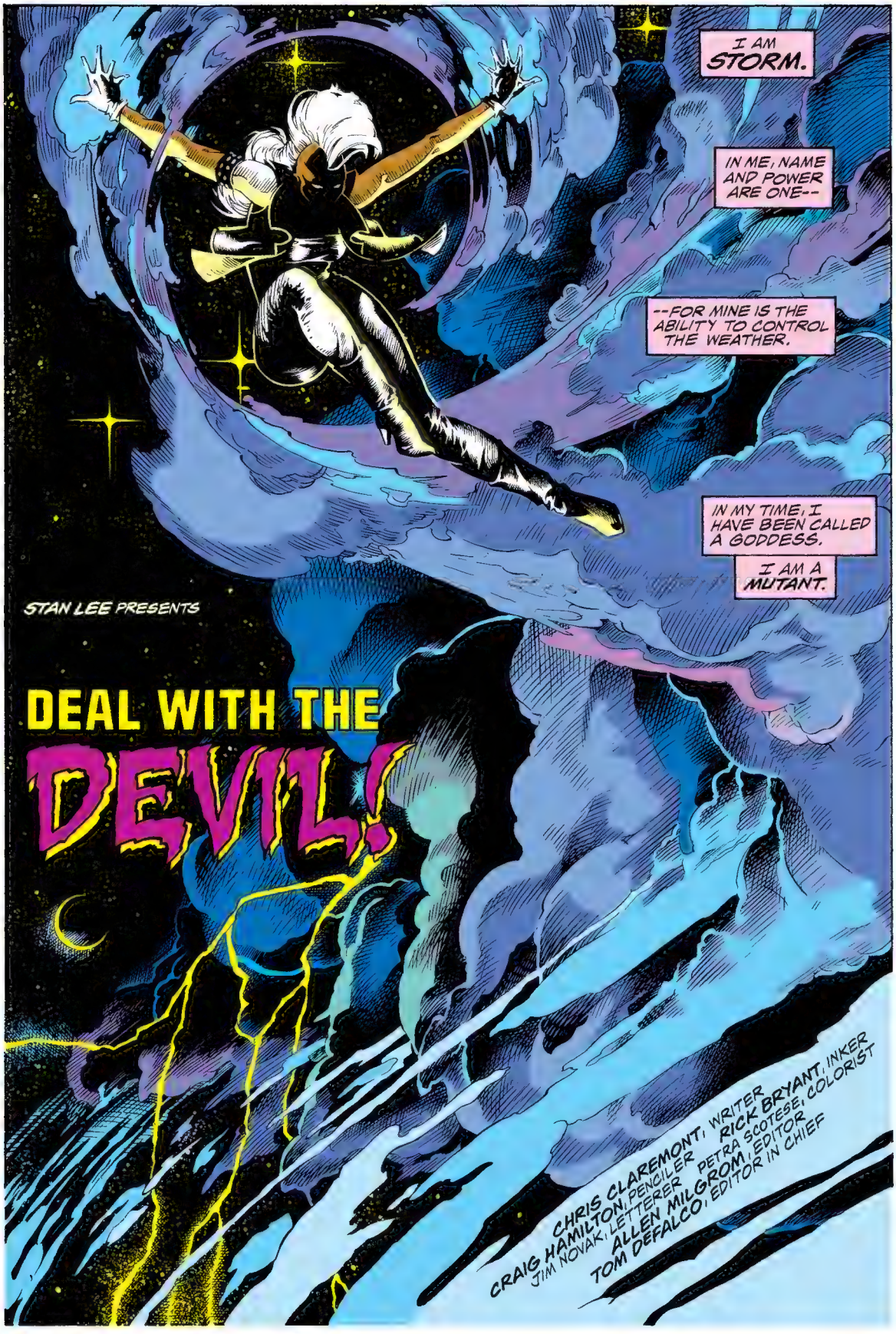
A FUTURE WHEREIN KATYA AND I WERE MARRIED? DOES THAT MEAN THERE IS HOPE FOR US, STILL? IS THAT WHAT I WANT?
WITH RESPECT, RACHEL, YOU'VE PROVED MY CASE. WHAT DO I OWE A WORLD THAT IS WILLING-- EAGER-- TO SLAUGHTER ME AND EVERYONE I LOVE SIMPLY BECAUSE WE EXIST?!
SHE DIDN'T MENTION ME-- AH GUESS AH WASN'T PART O' THE TEAM. DID AH SURVIVE, OR WAS AH DUMPED INTO SOME UNMARKED, BACK-ALLEY GRAVE?
ALL THAT HORROR-- AN' IT WAS MYSTIQUE'S FAULT. MY FOSTER MOM WAS THE MUTANT WHO MURDERED KELLY.
ALL MY HOPES...
...ALL MY DREAMS--
THANK HEAVEN, IN RACHEL'S FUTURE, I DID NOT LIVE TO SEE THEM TURNED TO ASHES.
FINALLY, THERE WAS JUST ME.
I FIGURED, WHAT THE HECK, NOTHING TO LOSE-- MAYBE I COULD TIMESLIP MYSELF BACK A DECADE OR TWO, ONLY PHYSICALLY INSTEAD OF PSYCHICALLY, LIKE I DID KATE, AND TRY TO PREVENT THAT FUTURE FROM COMING TO PASS.
I GOT WHEN I WANTED TO GO-- BUT NOT QUITE WHERE, 'CAUSE THIS ISN'T THE PAST I REMEMBER. MY ILLYANA SHOULD BE A KID, NOT A TEENAGER. MY STORM NEVER CUT HER HAIR OR LOST HER POWERS. MY MOM...
A LOT HERE IS DIFFERENT, BUT A LOT IS THE SAME. AND SOME... SOME OF IT IS WORSE.
THERE WERE THOSE AMONG US WHO WANTED ONLY VENGEANCE. THEY WANTED THE SCALES BALANCED IN FIRE AND BLOOD, LIFE FOR LIFE! BUT THE X-MEN STOOD FOR SOMETHING BETTER. THEY NEVER LOST HOPE, NO MATTER WHAT.
BECAUSE OF THEM, PROFESSOR XAVIER'S DREAM-- OF A WORLD WHERE NORMAL AND MUTANT COULD LIVE IN PEACE AND FELLOWSHIP, WHERE THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN THEM--WE'D ALL JUST BE HUMAN-- NEVER DIED.

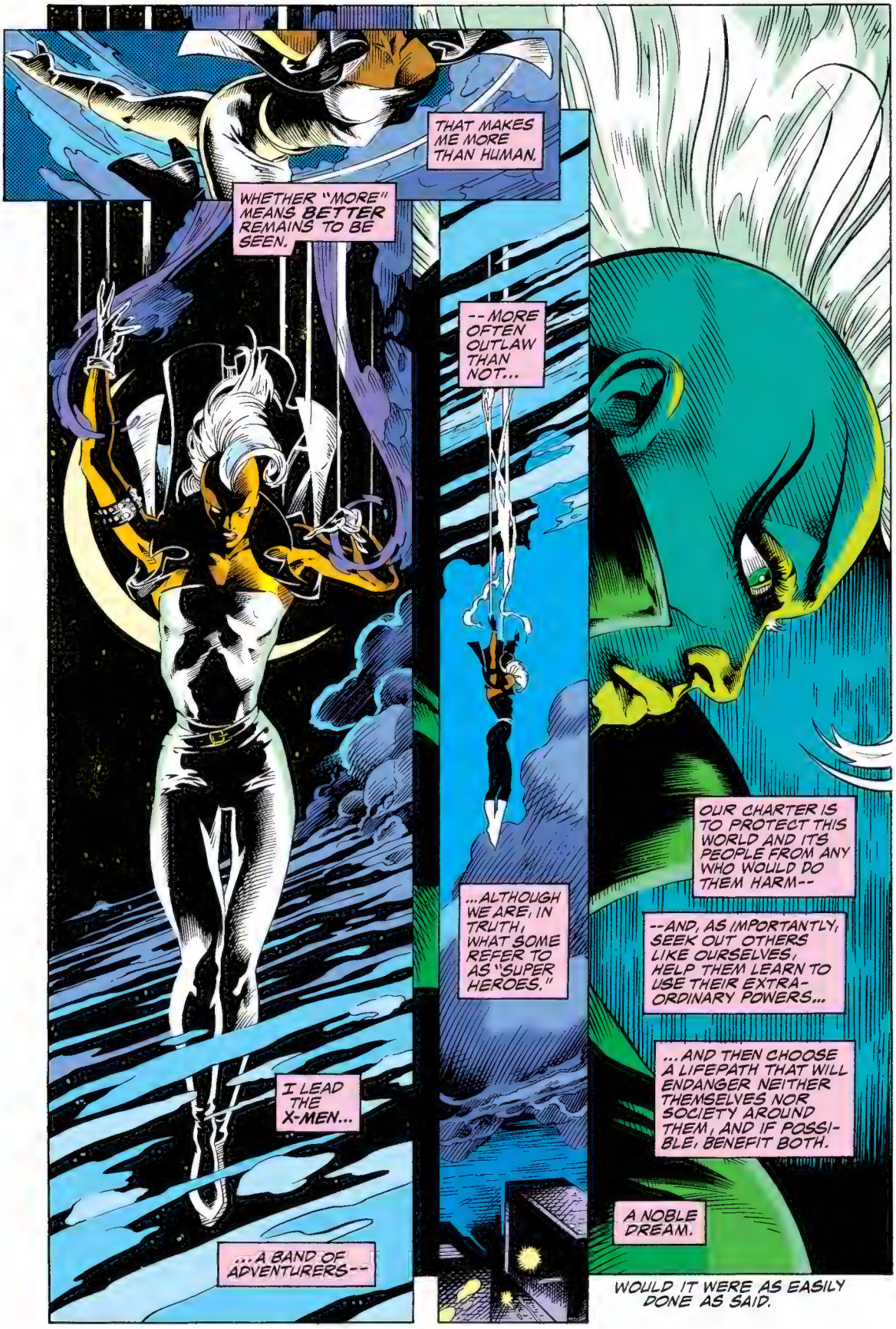
IF YOU TURN AWAY FROM THAT DREAM, KURT, YOU'LL DO MORE DAMAGE THAN YOU KNOW. WE MAY BE DOOMED-- OURS MAY BE A LOST CAUSE-- BUT SOMETIMES THE *WAY* WE LIVE AND DIE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SIMPLE FACT OF IT.
GIVE UP NOW, AND ALL THOSE SACRIFICES-- IN MY WORLD AS MUCH AS YOURS-- WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING!
WHAT IS THAT CLASSIC SAYING YOU ARE FOND OF QUOTING, KURT?
"WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RE-SPONSIBILITY."
WANT IT OR NOT.
LIKE IT OR NOT.
VERY WELL, PROFESSOR--
--FOR THE DREAM.
THANK YOU, MY SON, WITH ALL MY HEART.

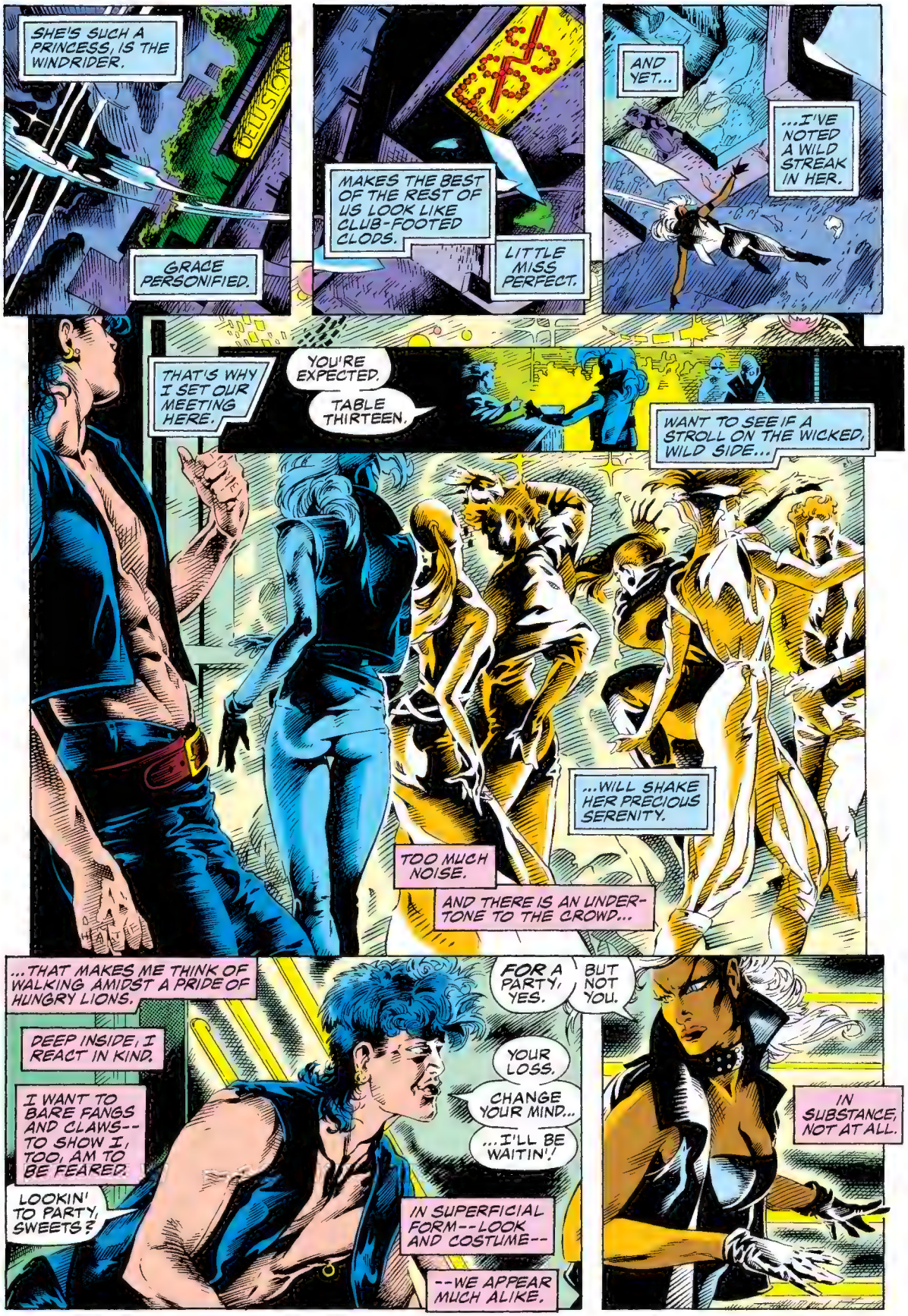

GIMME SOME CASES'A BLUES!
...SO HE SAID...
...HOW MUCH?!
DON'T BULL ME, CHUM, YOUR ICE IS FRESHER'N THOSE FISH!
WAREHOUSE
JR., CALL THE OFFICE!
HI, MOM!
SO WE CATCHIN' A GAME AFTER, OR WHAT?!
WE GOTTA SWING BY MY PLACE ONNA WAY AN' PICK UP MY BOY.
JAIME--!
I PROMISED, DUKE! HE GOT "A's" ON HIS REPORT CARD!
CARP
SNAPPER
WATCH IT, YOU GOONS-- THE CRATE!!!
CUTE, REAL CUTE.
DON'T GET IN AN UPROAR, BOSS, YOU'LL GIVE YOURSELF A CORONARY. I'LL CLEAN THIS UP.
WHAT'S THAT--?!
SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THAT FISH.
DON'T LOOK SO SPECIAL, WHY'D I-- HOLY MARY!?!
JAIME RODRIGUEZ YOU JUST HIT THE JACKPOT!
HEARKEN, O MAN. I AM POWER. DON ME-- OBEY ME--
-- AND THE WORLD IS YOURS!!
NEXT: Two Girls Out To HAVE FUN!

Special Bonus: Set during Rogue's disapperance in *The Uncanny X-Men* #185, Chris Claremont and Craig Hamilton stage a summit between X-Man and Evil Mutant in this feature from *Marvel Fanfare* #40 (October 1988).


I RIDE THE JET STREAM SOUTH.
TYPICAL ATLANTA SUMMER NIGHT, STEAMBATH CITY.
TEN MILES ABOVE THE EARTH--IN THE COLD, CLEAR AIR WHERE ONLY I CAN BREATHE--I SOAR ALMOST AS FAST AS MAN'S MACHINES CAN FLY.
AND ON CUE, WITH THE SUNSET, BOOMERS. THUNDERSTORMS, TRYING THEIR BEST TO DROWN THE PLACE.
I MOVE FREELY HERE, BENDING THE STRATOSPHERIC WINDS TO MY WILL, WITH MINIMAL EFFECT ON THE SLEEPING WORLD BELOW.
TONIGHT'S DIFFERENT.
I SENSE THAT RIGHT OFF.
A TEXTURE TO THE BREEZE AS IT RAKES MY SKIN...
...AN ESSENCE THAT MARKS IT AS SOMETHING MORE THAN NATURAL...
...AND WAKES THE HUNTRESS IN ME.
SHE'LL BE HERE SOON, THE ARROGANT WITCH.
AND THE FUN'LL BEGIN.


I AM STORM.
IN ME, NAME AND POWER ARE ONE--
--FOR MINE IS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THE WEATHER.
IN MY TIME, I HAVE BEEN CALLED A GODDESS.
I AM A MUTANT.
STAN LEE PRESENTS
DEAL WITH THE DEVIL!
CHRIS CLAREMONT, WRITER
CRAIG HAMILTON, PENCILER
JIM NOVAK, LETTERER
RICK BRYANT, INKER
PETRA SCOTESE, COLORIST
ALLEN MILGROM, EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO, EDITOR IN CHIEF


THAT MAKES ME MORE THAN HUMAN.
WHETHER "MORE" MEANS BETTER REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
--MORE OFTEN OUTLAW THAN NOT...
...ALTHOUGH WE ARE, IN TRUTH, WHAT SOME REFER TO AS "SUPER HEROES."
I LEAD THE X-MEN...
...A BAND OF ADVENTURERS--
OUR CHARTER IS TO PROTECT THIS WORLD AND ITS PEOPLE FROM ANY WHO WOULD DO THEM HARM--
--AND, AS IMPORTANTLY, SEEK OUT OTHERS LIKE OURSELVES, HELP THEM LEARN TO USE THEIR EXTRA-ORDINARY POWERS...
...AND THEN CHOOSE A LIFEPATH THAT WILL ENDANGER NEITHER THEMSELVES NOR SOCIETY AROUND THEM, AND IF POSSIBLE, BENEFIT BOTH.
A NOBLE DREAM.
WOULD IT WERE AS EASILY DONE AS SAID.


SHE'S SUCH A PRINCESS, IS THE WINDRIDER.
GRACE PERSONIFIED.
MAKES THE BEST OF THE REST OF US LOOK LIKE CLUB-FOOTED CLODS.
LITTLE MISS PERFECT.
AND YET...
...I'VE NOTED A WILD STREAK IN HER.
THAT'S WHY I SET OUR MEETING HERE.
YOU'RE EXPECTED.
TABLE THIRTEEN.
WANT TO SEE IF A STROLL ON THE WICKED, WILD SIDE...
...WILL SHAKE HER PRECIOUS SERENITY.
TOO MUCH NOISE.
AND THERE IS AN UNDER-TONE TO THE CROWD...
...THAT MAKES ME THINK OF WALKING AMIDST A PRIDE OF HUNGRY LIONS.
DEEP INSIDE, I REACT IN KIND.
I WANT TO BARE FANGS AND CLAWS--TO SHOW I, TOO, AM TO BE FEARED.
LOOKIN' TO PARTY, SWEETS?
FOR A PARTY, YES.
BUT NOT YOU.
YOUR LOSS.
CHANGE YOUR MIND...
...I'LL BE WAITIN'!
IN SUPERFICIAL FORM--LOOK AND COSTUME--
--WE APPEAR MUCH ALIKE.
IN SUBSTANCE, NOT AT ALL.

WHICH IS MORE DISTURBING--
--OUR SIMILARITIES...
...OR DIFFERENCES?
WE'RE BOTH HUNTERS.
KOCAINE TOURE
THING IS, I KNOW IT. SHE'S STILL LEARNING.
NOT MUCH OF AN EDGE.
I'VE BET THE WORLD ON LESS.
TABLE'S IN THE NEXT ROOM.
YOUR SISTER'S ALREADY THERE.
?
I HAVE NO SISTER.
BUT THEN, HOW WAITRESS TO KNOW...
...THE WOMAN SHE REFERRED TO...
...IS A METAMORPH?
MYSTIQUE!?!
ROLLING THUNDER OUTSIDE, LOUDER THAN THE BAND.
ST. ELMO'S FIRE FLICKERS IN NEON SHADOWS.
FLASH OF EMBARRASSED ANGER ON STORM'S FACE.
GOT TO HER!
SILLY BABY, THIS IS THE LEAST SHE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED.

HAVE A SEAT?
ORORO--SURELY YOU DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO APPEAR IN PUBLIC WEARING MY OWN FACE?
THE LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS IS AN INTERNATIONALLY NOTORIOUS TERRORIST. I THOUGHT THIS CAMOUFLAGE WOULD AVOID ANY... UNPLEASANTNESS.
YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR. A TRUCE EXISTS BETWEEN US, REMEMBER? YOUR SAFETY IS GUARANTEED.
ON THAT, I PLEDGED MY WORD OF HONOR.
ASSUMING, OF COURSE...
...THAT "WORD" MEANS ANYTHING.
VERY GOOD.
I BELIEVE THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU YET.
BUT IF IT CAUSES YOU SUCH DISTRESS...
...FOR ME TO WEAR YOUR FACE...
...THAT'S EASILY REMEDIED.
KITTY PRYDE?!!
STOP IT, MYSTIQUE! PLAY WITH ME, IF YOU MUST...
...BUT LEAVE THE CHILD OUT OF THIS!
DEAR ME.
I SEEM TO HAVE STRUCK A NERVE.
PERHAPS, THEN, YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT WELL ENOUGH ALONE?
SHE MASKS HER FURY WELL.
AND I WONDER, HOW FAR CAN I--DARE I--

GET TO THE POINT, WOMAN!
KRASH
YOU SUMMONED ME. WHY?!
FSS
ATLANTA'S PROGRESSIVE
ALL IN GOOD TIME.
FIRST, DARLING, CONTROL YOURSELF.
YOU'RE FRIGHTENING THE HUMANS.
AND, I MUST ADMIT...
...NOT ONLY THEM.

SILENCE BETWEEN US FOR A TIME...
...AS I PULL DEEP WITHIN MYSELF...
...TO CALM MY RAGE AND THE TEMPEST IT SPAWNED.
BUT IT TAKES AN EFFORT...
...I FIND MYSELF LESS AND LESS WILLING TO EXERT.
IN HER EYES, WE BOTH BEHOLD THE ABYSS.
SHE'S A VITAL, PASSIONATE WOMAN; HOW LONG CAN SHE DENY HER NATURAL--HUMAN--EMOTIONS?
AND WHAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN THAT VOLCANO EVENTUALLY ERUPTS?
WHERE IS ROGUE?
SHE'S MY DAUGHTER, STORM--
--AS MUCH MINE AS IF SHE WAS MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD--NOT SOME PRETEND-PROTEGE LIKE YOUR PRYDE BRAT!
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT HER FOR DAYS AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL...
SHE HAS RUN AWAY.
CURSE YOU ALL!
I KNEW SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED.
SHE HAS BEEN UNDER CONSIDERABLE--AND INCREASING--STRAIN LATELY.
PROFESSOR XAVIER BELIEVES IT IS A REMANIFESTATION OF THE PSYCHIC INSTABILITY THAT PROMPTED HER TO SEEK HIS AID.
FAT LOT OF GOOD HE'S DONE HER.
COULD YOU DO BETTER?
DID YOU?
FRESHEN YOUR DRINK?
AND HOW 'BOUT YOU--
--NAME YOUR POISON?
SHE'LL HAVE HEMLOCK.

DUNNO THAT BRAND.
DIDN'T THINK SO.
NEVER MIND.
LOVE YOUR HAIR...
...AN' BEWITCHIN' OUTFITS.
BEHOLD, DARLING-- EVOLUTION IN ACTION...
...BUT IN WHICH DIRECTION?
SUPERIOR SERVICE...
...MERITS AN APPROPRIATE RECOMPENSE.
SHE IS SO FREE-- SO CASUAL--
--WITH HER FAVORS.
GIVING AND TAKING PLEASURE WHEN AND AS SHE PLEASES.
WHERE I...
...DARE NOT.
SHE KNOWS THIS.
WHICH IS WHY SHE DOES IT.
MY FACE IS STONE.
HERS, QUICKSILVER.
FILLED WITH EMOTIONS THAT MEAN NOTHING.
BOTH FACADES.
SHE DOES NOT CARE.
I DARE NOT ALLOW MYSELF TO.
WHICH OF US, I WONDER, IS THE BETTER OFF?
SLAP
DELIGHTFUL BOY.
SUCH A PITY, MY DEAR...
...YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING.

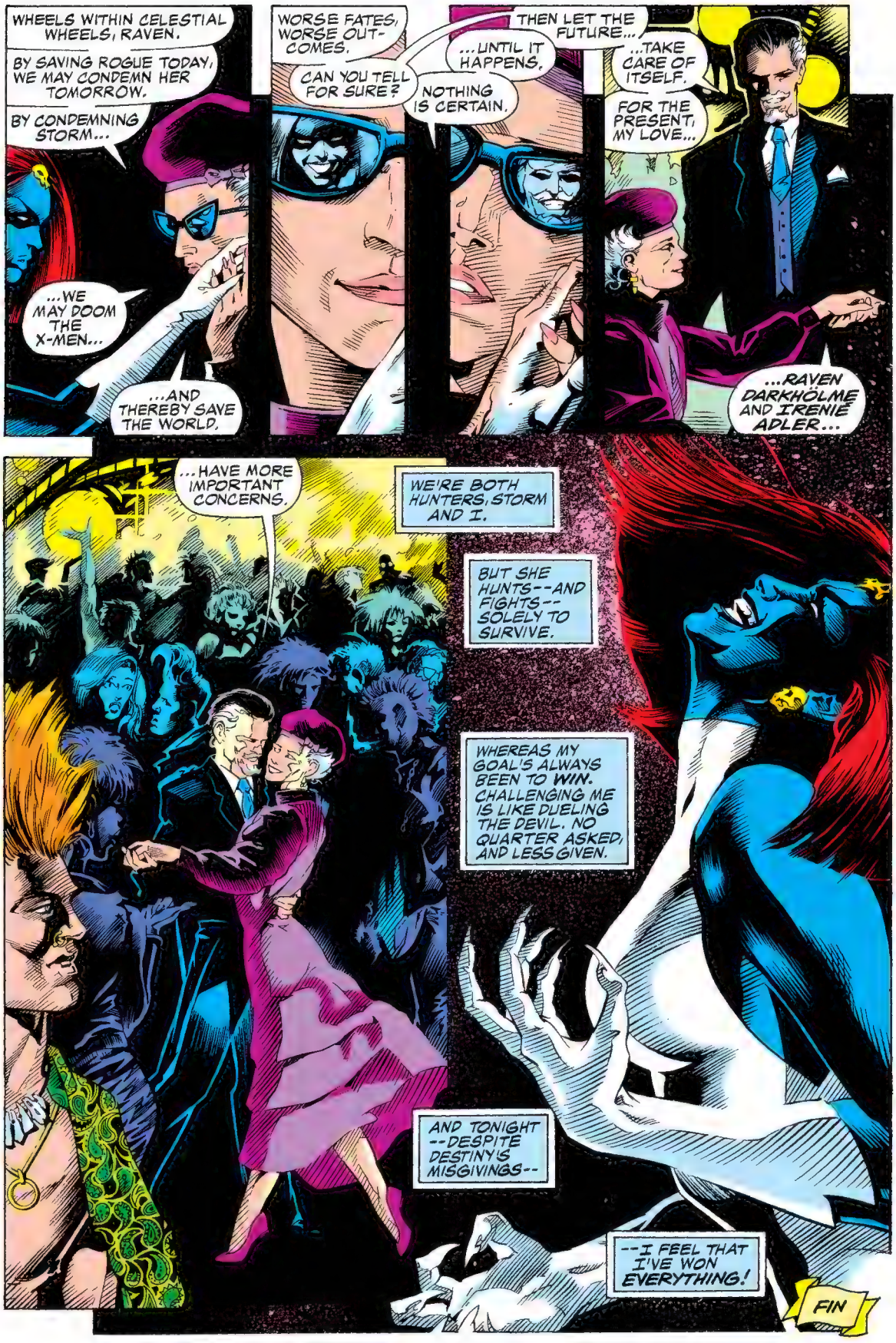
IS THERE A REASON FOR OUR MEETING--OTHER THAN THIS GAME OF ONE-UPMANSHIP?
ACTUALLY--YES, ROGUE.
A FLASH IN HER EYES--HERE, AT LAST, SOMETHING THAT DOES MATTER.
SHE STANDS FALSELY ACCUSED OF MURDERING AN AGENT OF SHIELD-- THE INTERNATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION.
I AM WORKING TO CLEAR HER...
...BUT, IN THE MEANTIME, A FEDERAL STRIKE FORCE IS ON HER TRAIL.
IN THEIR POSSESSION IS A WEAPON PUTATIVELY CAPABLE OF STRIPPING ANY SUPER-BEING OF HIS POWERS --PERHAPS PERMANENTLY.
HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS?
I HAVE MY SOURCES.
WHAT ARE THEY?
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO ASK.
HOWEVER, I ASSURE YOU THEY'RE UNIMPEACHABLE.
YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?
I KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.
A LIST OF THE CHILD'S HAUNTS.
THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY IS CALDECOTT COUNTY, ON THE MISSISSIPPI. IT'S WHERE SHE WAS BORN.
OH--DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
AH WELL, EVERYONE HAS HIS/HER LITTLE SECRETS.
OR PERHAPS --ROGUE DOESN'T TRUST YOU AS MUCH AS YOU BELIEVE.

WHY TELL ME THIS, MYSTIQUE?
WHY INVOLVE THE X-MEN AT ALL?
I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THIS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO WIN HER BACK, IS THAT NOT WHAT YOU WANT?
MORE THAN ANY-THING.
BUT ASSUME YOU'RE CORRECT--AND I SUCCEED--NOTHING WILL HAVE CHANGED. HER POWER WILL STILL BE OUT OF CONTROL. I'LL STILL BE UNABLE TO CURE HER.
I THOUGHT OF ALLOWING THE FEDS TO CATCH HER, AND USE THEIR NEUTRALIZER ON HER.
SHE'D BE NORMAL THEN, WITH NOTHING TO FEAR, ABLE AT LAST TO TOUCH AND BE TOUCHED, TO LIVE AN ORDINARY LIFE.
CAN YOU IMAGINE, STORM, BEING TERRIFIED TO TOUCH YOUR OWN CHILD, BECAUSE--IN A VERY REAL SENSE--THAT TOUCH MEANS YOUR OWN DESTRUCTION, AS SHE ABSORBS YOUR PSYCHE?!
OR BEING AFRAID TO TOUCH ANYONE, FOR THAT SAME REASON?
COULD YOU ENDURE SUCH AN EXISTENCE?!
IN A SENSE, I DO.
I DO NOT...
NO.
I WAS TEMPTED. STILL AM.
BUT THE DEVICE IS UNTESTED. NO ONE HAS THE SLIGHTEST NOTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THERE ARE ANY SIDE EFFECTS, OR HOW SERIOUS THEY MIGHT BE. THE RISK IS TOO GREAT.
MOREOVER...
...I CAN'T DO IT...
...NOT TO ROGUE.
I HAVEN'T THE RIGHT TO MAKE THAT DECISION. IT HAS TO BE HERS ALONE.
SO, STORM, I LEAVE HER TO YOU.
I TRUST YOU'RE PLEASED. THE X-MEN WIN AGAIN.
AND THE PRICE?
IF LOOKS COULD KILL...
HIGHER THAN YOU DARE SUSPECT, WITCH!

CONSIDER THIS A GIFT.
FROM A MOTHER...
...FOR HER CHILD.
SHE DOESN'T FOLLOW.
WOULDN'T MATTER IF SHE HAD.
DANCE FLOOR'S JAMMED, UNDER CHRISTMAS COLORED STROBES.
WITH EACH STEP, EACH FLASH OF DARKNESS...
...I SWITCH SHAPE, COLOR, GENDER, STYLE.
I'M QUICKSILVER.
TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ONE HEARTBEAT TO THE NEXT.
IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD.

I SHOULD FOLLOW.
MYSTIQUE STANDS AMONG THE X-MEN'S DEADLIEST, MOST IMPLACABLE FOES.
BUT, IN HONOR, I CAN NO MORE VIOLATE OUR TRUCE...
CHOMP FLESH
EXIT
...THAN I CAN ABANDON ROGUE.--
--EVEN THOUGH I KNOW IT IS A TRAP.
THAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH THE MANTLE OF RESPONSIBILITY.
ONCE ASSUMED, IT FOREVER THREATENS TO DESTROY YOU.
YET, IF EVER DENIED, THAT ACT WILL MOST ASSUREDLY DESTROY YOUR SOUL--THAT WHICH GIVES LIFE ITS MEANING.
A HARD PATH...
...BUT THE ONLY ONE I KNOW TO FOLLOW.
SHE WAITS AT A CORNER TABLE, ELEGANT AS ALWAYS, AS BEAUTIFUL TODAY AS WHEN FIRST WE MET.
I BEHOLD HER IN THE FLESH.
SHE SEES ME ONLY IN HER MIND'S-EYE.
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHICH OF US...
...WAS THE MORE FORTUNATE?
LOVE
HIYA, GRANNIE!
HEY, AIN'TCHA, Y'KNOW, LIKE A WEE BIT OLD FOR THIS JOINT?
NO MORE SO THAN YOU...
...MYSTIQUE.

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN.
I AM A PRECOG, RAVEN.
I "SEE" THE FUTURE.
I KNEW WHEN YOU WOULD REJOIN ME...
...AND IN WHAT--INCREDIBLY OUTLANDISH--FORM...
...BEFORE WE ENTERED THIS ESTABLISHMENT.
RAVEN, DID YOU WARN STORM OF MY PRESCIENT VISION...
...THAT WHOEVER GOES TO ROGUE'S AID WILL SUFFER THE FATE MEANT FOR HER?!
DON'T BE ABSURD, IRENIE--
--OF COURSE NOT!
RAVEN--!
THIS WAS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO BOTH SAVE MY DAUGHTER AND CRIPPLE MY FOREMOST ENEMIES; HOW COULD YOU HAVE EXPECTED ME TO PASS IT BY?
BESIDES, WITH YOUR POWER, YOU MUST HAVE KNOWN MY INTENTIONS.
YES.
YET, YOU DID NOTHING TO TRY TO STOP ME.
YOU--AND ROGUE--MEAN MORE TO ME THAN STORM.
I COULD NOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF EITHER OF YOU BEING HURT.
I WAS TOO COWARDLY.
YOU'RE NO COWARD.
STRONGER BY FAR THAN ME, MOST TIMES.
AND EVEN IF YOU WERE A COWARD...
...I WOULDN'T CHERISH YOU ANY THE LESS.
STILL, EVEN AS I WIPE AWAY HER--RARE --TEARS...
...I SENSE DEEPER MEANINGS TO HER WORDS...
...A SECRET DESPERATELY HIDDEN...
...AND WONDER IF I SHOULD--DARE--PRY?


WHEELS WITHIN CELESTIAL WHEELS, RAVEN.
BY SAVING ROGUE TODAY, WE MAY CONDEMN HER TOMORROW.
BY CONDEMNING STORM...
...WE MAY DOOM THE X-MEN...
...AND THEREBY SAVE THE WORLD.
WORSE FATES, WORSE OUTCOMES.
CAN YOU TELL FOR SURE?
NOTHING IS CERTAIN.
...UNTIL IT HAPPENS.
THEN LET THE FUTURE...
...TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.
FOR THE PRESENT, MY LOVE...
...RAVEN DARKHÖLME AND IRENIE ADLER...
...HAVE MORE IMPORTANT CONCERNS.
WE'RE BOTH HUNTERS, STORM AND I.
BUT SHE HUNTS--AND FIGHTS--SOLELY TO SURVIVE.
WHEREAS MY GOAL'S ALWAYS BEEN TO **WIN.** CHALLENGING ME IS LIKE DUELING THE DEVIL. NO QUARTER ASKED, AND LESS GIVEN.
AND TONIGHT --DESPITE DESTINY'S MISGIVINGS--
--I FEEL THAT I'VE WON EVERYTHING!
FIN

Marvel Age #6 (September 1983) *Magik* miniseries promotional article by Mark Lerer

THE CREATION OF A NEW LIMITED SERIES

ILLYANA AND STORM

by Mark Lerer

Somewhere -- somewhen -- in the dark realm between planes of reality called Limbo, a malevolent sorcerer tempts an innocent girl. And the latest Marvel Limited Series is born! **ILLYANA AND STORM**, a four-part series from the creative nucleus that brings you **X-MEN** and **THE NEW MUTANTS**, chronicles the life of **Illyana Natalyanovna Rasputin**, kid sister of **X-Man, Colossus**, during the mysterious time she spent in the domain of the demon-lord **Belasco**.

Let's go back. Remember **X-MEN #**160? **Belasco**, banished to limbo by the dark gods he serves, magically abducted **Illyana** from the **X-Men's** care. He enticed her to stay with him by giving her a mystic amulet. He promised her a glorious destiny if she would learn from him mastery of the arcane arts. **The X-Men** had followed **Illyana** into Limbo, and after encountering strange, demonic versions of themselves, managed to rescue her. But, while literally tugging the girl out of one realm and into the other, **Kitty Pryde** lost her grip on **Illyana** momentarily. One brief moment in our dimension apparently corresponded to *seven years* in **Belasco's** world, for **Illyana** returned safely with our heroes to Earth a full seven years older!

Things got a little strange around Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters after that. The now-thirteen-year-old **Illyana** seemed as close as ever to her American family, but she confided in them precious little about the seven years she spent with **Belasco**. Mused **Kitty**, "I keep forgetting that she spent half of her life in a mystic limbo... She hardly ever speaks of that time, and we've never pressed her. I wonder if we'll learn... I wonder if we really *want* to!" We learned a little bit when Illyana dropped this hint to Professor Xavier:

Then, seven issues later, coyness gave way to terror! After seeing an image of **Belasco, Illyana** conjured a mystic sword and attacked **Kitty**, as if possessed by some dark demon!

The other star of the Limited Series is the version of **Storm** that our heroes met in **Belasco's** Limbo. She is **Storm's** older self, a sorceress who has achieved command of the arts arcane. Meeting this future self has been a disturbing experience for "our" **Storm**. She has come to wonder what latent sorcerous talents she may possess in addition to her familiar mutant powers. And how could she ever learn to live and master sorcery in **Belasco's** realm when she knows how evil **Belasco** is?

ILLYANA AND STORM answers these questions. Set in Limbo during those mysterious seven years, it recounts the two heroine's experiences with sorcery, with **Belasco's** minions, and with the unpredictability of their true selves. Editor **Louise Jones** elaborated for us: "**Storm**, in her wisdom and maturity, encourages Illyana's involvement with Light sorcery, the magic of responsibility, of good. But there is a Dark sorcery, too – less benevolent, more dangerous, and more... *fun*. And remember that knowledge of any sorcery, Dark or Light, good or bad, will *corrupt*.

"Furthermore, **Illyana** and **Storm's** seven years are fraught with tragedy."

John Buscema will draw the series. **Tom Palmer**, one of the medium's most sought-after and influential craftsmen, will ink. **Chris Claremont**, the **X-Men** writer who knows the characters of **Illyana** and **Storm** inside out, will script. This fine creative ensemble promises a four-part adventure of high fantasy and drama unparalleled in the contemporary comics scene.

Watch for it!

INTRODUCTION

BY C.B. CEBULSKI

FROM *X-MEN: MAGIK – STORM & ILLYANA PREMIERE HC* (2008)

When it comes to comics, you can often judge a book by its cover. Or at least you think you can. Especially when you're 12 years old and just biked ten miles to the five-and-dime with your two-dollar allowance in your pocket to buy new funny books.

So there I was looking over the rack at the limited selection of comics I had to choose from one weekend in 1983. With comics at a whopping 60 cents apiece back then, I had to be ever so vigilant in my choices. At that time, books like *Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight, The New Mutants, Thor, Rom,* and *Fantastic Four* were all must-buys for me. But when I had some extra cash, and it came time to choose a couple of new titles to experiment with, covers played a vital role in my decision-making process. *Cloak and Dagger*, *The Falcon*, and *Hawkeye* were all purchased solely based on their kick-ass covers. I didn't even have to open the comics, I knew just by looking at them I was in for a treat. And so it is that to this day, I can still remember not buying *Magik #1* because I did not care for the cover. To my young eyes, it featured strange versions of random X-Men characters I really didn't care that much about, all posed rather oddly in my opinion, with no one in particular jumping out at me. Why should I bother to pick that up? I could just tell it was gonna be boring. And besides, they spelled "magic" wrong.

Then, what I assume would have been a month or so later, I pedaled my way back down to the store again for new books. Sitting there this time was *Magik #2*. And right then and there it became obvious what a difference a cover can make! That second cover immediately caught my eye and made an instant impression. An evil Nightcrawler holding three swords (one in his tail!) fighting a clearly frightened young girl who looked about my age, with a crowd of demonic spectators (including Jabba the Hutt!) looking on, clearly hoping for spilled blood. Now that was a cover! SOLD! I went back and found the first issue, which I think the store still had if memory serves, and devoured them both. And that's how I fell in love with Illyana Rasputin.

I don't want to spoil anything for you here as you might be about to read this story for the first time, just like I did more than two decades ago, and I want your experience to be just as magical as mine was. (Or is it "magikal"? Magickal?) *Magik* is a story about a girl. It's a story about innocence. It's a story about loss. It's a story about growing up. It's a story about finding out who you are and what you are made of. And while this story might be supernatural, it's a story to which each and every one of us can relate. And that's what makes this series so special.

Chris Claremont, John Buscema, Ron Frenz, Sal Buscema, and Tom Palmer are our guides on this adventure. It's their words and pictures that put us right there alongside Illyana as she makes her journey through Limbo to find the light inside the darkness and save her own soul. This *Magik* mini-series explores the ambiguities of adolescence and the meaning of maturity, masterfully disguised in the form of an X-Men comic book.

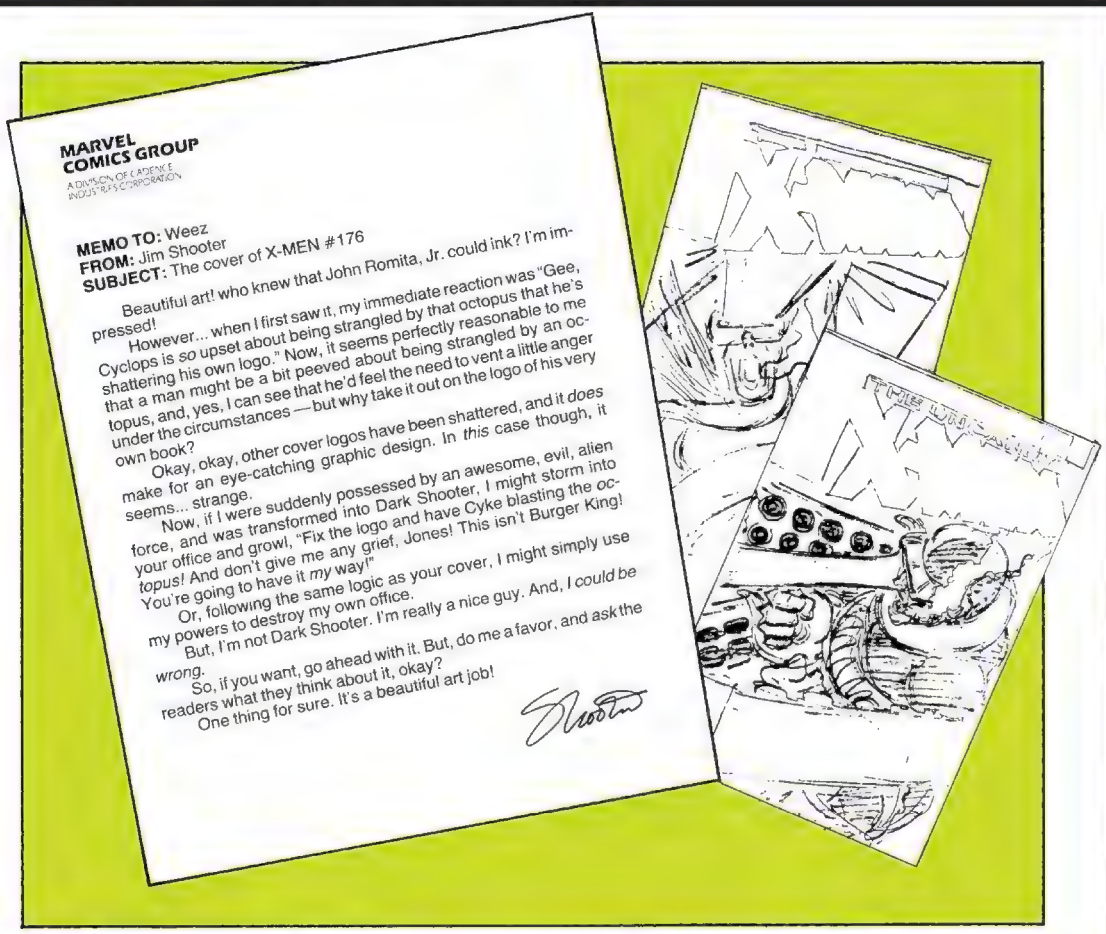
I remember the agony of finishing the third issue and realizing I had to wait a full month to discover the final fate of my "little snowflake." And when I finally did get a glimpse of the cover to the fourth issue, I remember my young self being crushed. "Did they really just spoil the end of the story for me on the cover?!" I thought. Well, I'll let you find out the answer to that question for yourself, but I will give you a hint…

Luckily, even in comics, sometimes you can't judge a book by its cover.

Soulfully,
C.B. Cebulski
New York City
Aug. 28, 2008

As an editor at Marvel Comics, C.B. Cebulski helped shepherd the Mangaverse and Ultimate Universe lines. As a writer, his credits include several creator-owned comics, the autobiographical Wonderlost, *Marvel's* Loners *and Image's* Compass.

The Uncanny X-Men #176 cover sketches by John Romita Jr., and Assistant Editors' Month house ad from the issue #176 letters page



MARVEL COMICS GROUP
A DIVISION OF CADENCE INDUSTRIES CORPORATION

MEMO TO: Weez
FROM: Jim Shooter
SUBJECT: The cover of X-MEN #176

Beautiful art! who knew that John Romita, Jr. could ink? I'm impressed!

However... when I first saw it, my immediate reaction was "Gee, Cyclops is *so* upset about being strangled by that octopus that he's shattering his own logo." Now, it seems perfectly reasonable to me that a man might be a bit peeved about being strangled by an octopus, and, yes, I can see that he'd feel the need to vent a little anger under the circumstances — but why take it out on the logo of his very own book?

Okay, okay, other cover logos have been shattered, and it *does* make for an eye-catching graphic design. In *this* case though, it seems... strange.

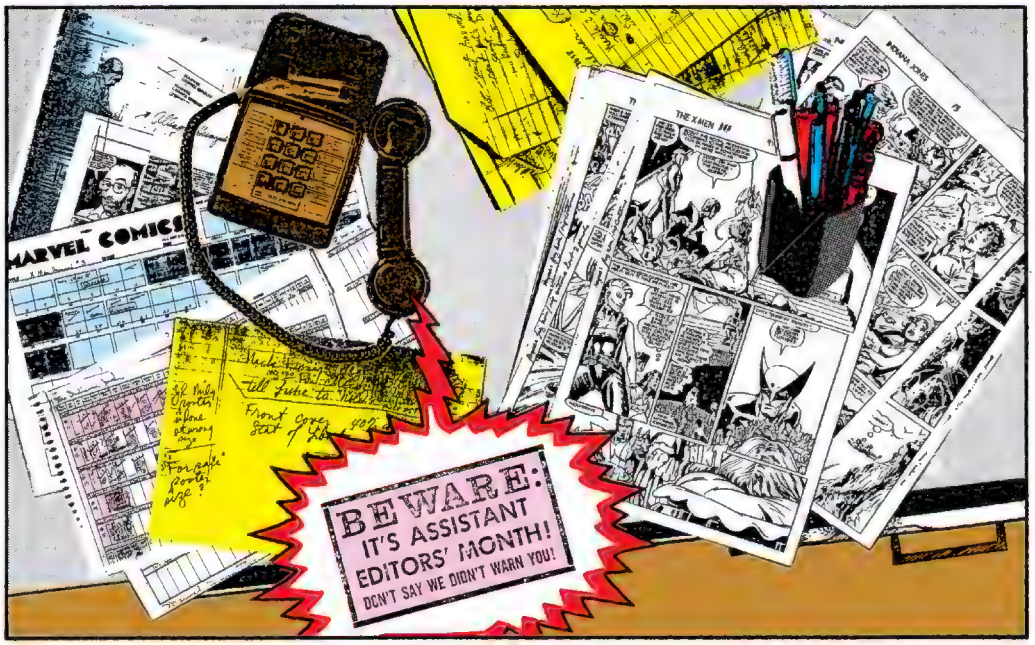
Now, if I were suddenly possessed by an awesome, evil, alien force, and was transformed into Dark Shooter, I might storm into your office and growl, "Fix the logo and have Cyke blasting the octopus! And don't give me any grief, Jones! This isn't Burger King! You're going to have it *my* way!"

Or, following the same logic as your cover, I might simply use my powers to destroy my own office.

But, I'm not Dark Shooter. I'm really a nice guy. And, *I could be wrong.*

So, if you want, go ahead with it. But, do me a favor, and ask the readers what they think about it, okay?

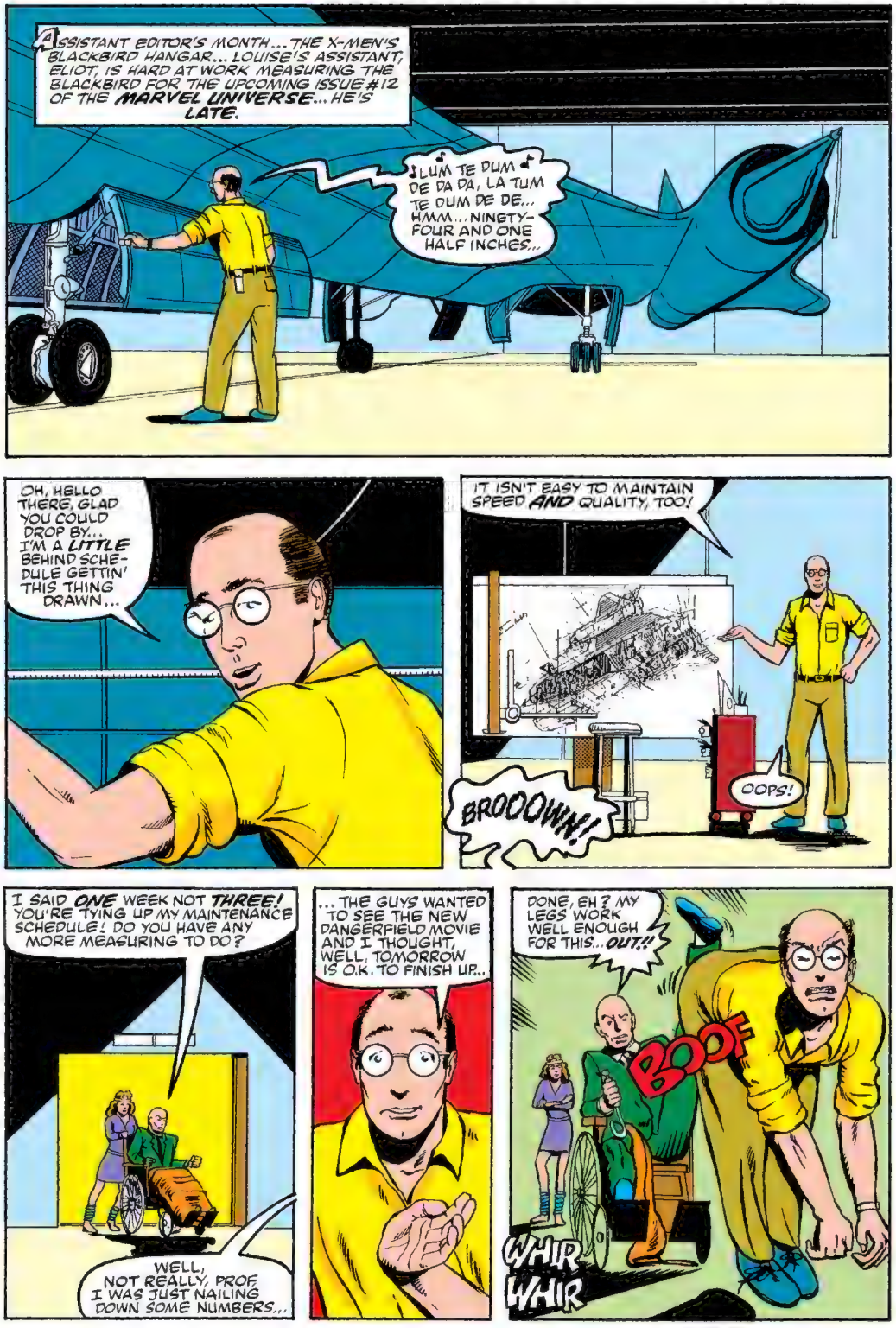
One thing for sure. It's a beautiful art job!



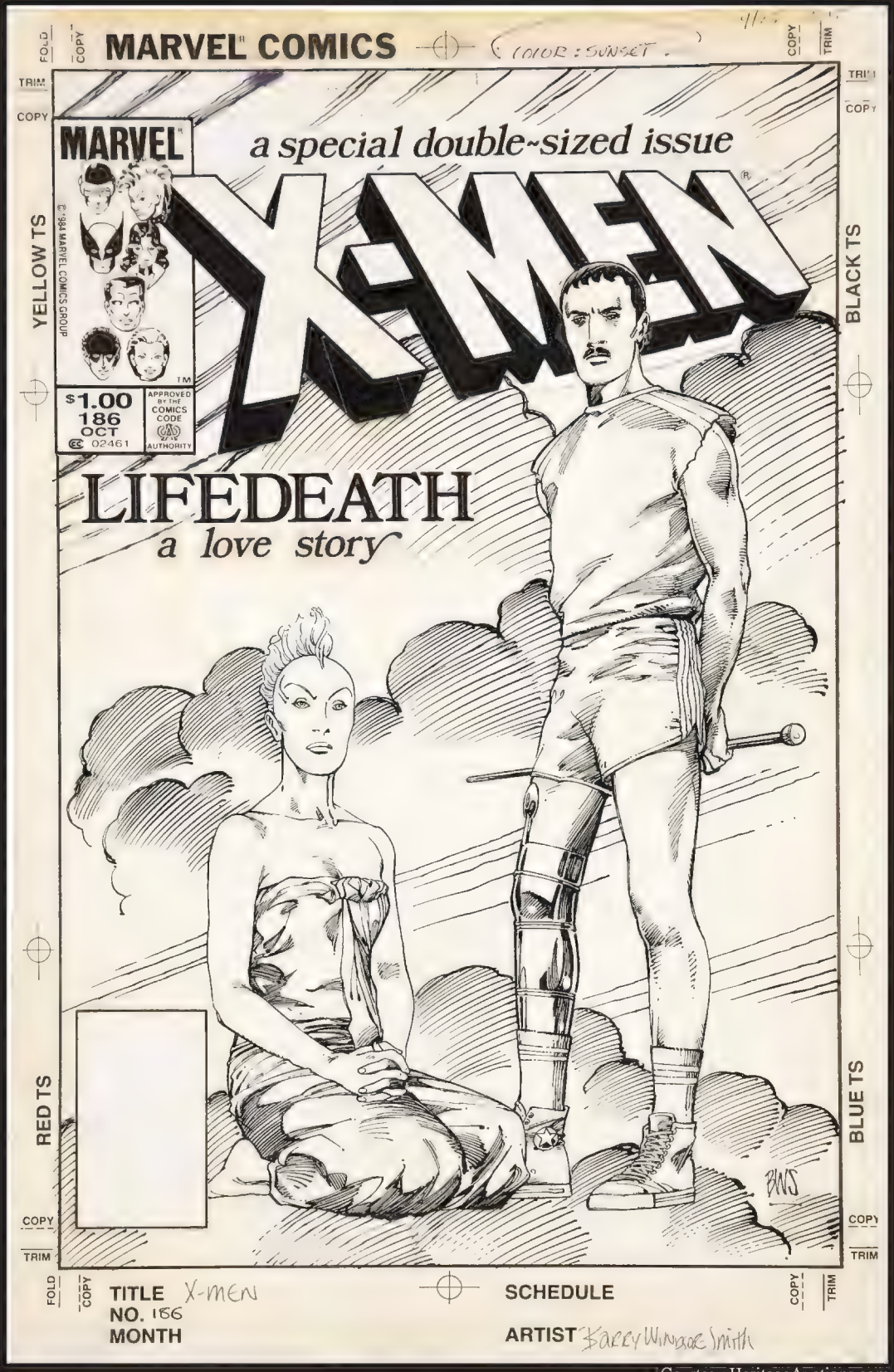
The Uncanny X-Men #176 cover original art
by John Romita Jr.

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

Assistant Editors' Month bonus feature
from *The Uncanny X-Men* #177


ASSISTANT EDITOR'S MONTH... THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD HANGAR... LOUISE'S ASSISTANT, ELIOT, IS HARD AT WORK MEASURING THE BLACKBIRD FOR THE UPCOMING ISSUE #12 OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE... HE'S LATE.
♪LUM TE DUM DE DA DA, LA TUM TE DUM DE DE... HMM... NINETY-FOUR AND ONE HALF INCHES...
OH, HELLO THERE, GLAD YOU COULD DROP BY... I'M A LITTLE BEHIND SCHEDULE GETTIN' THIS THING DRAWN...
IT ISN'T EASY TO MAINTAIN SPEED AND QUALITY, TOO!
BROOOWN!!
OOPS!
I SAID ONE WEEK NOT THREE! YOU'RE TYING UP MY MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE! DO YOU HAVE ANY MORE MEASURING TO DO?
WELL, NOT REALLY, PROF. I WAS JUST NAILING DOWN SOME NUMBERS...
...THE GUYS WANTED TO SEE THE NEW DANGERFIELD MOVIE AND I THOUGHT, WELL, TOMORROW IS O.K. TO FINISH UP...
DONE, EH? MY LEGS WORK WELL ENOUGH FOR THIS... OUT!!
BOOF
WHIR WHIR

The Uncanny X-Men #186 cover original art
by Barry Windsor-Smith



Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

Marvel Age #16 (July 1984) Chris Claremont interview
by Mark Lerer

MARVEL AGE TALKS TO CHRIS CLAREMONT

Coming soon from Epic — BLACK DRAGON by Chris Claremont and John Bolton!
Black Dragon © 1984 by Chris Claremont and John Bolton. All rights reserved.

by **Mark Lerer**

Before we get into ***THE X-MEN*** *and* ***THE NEW MUTANTS****, tell us about your latest series,* ***Black Dragon****!*

It's a medieval sword and sorcery Limited Series that I'm writing and **John Bolton** is drawing for the Epic comics line. Let me give you the historical setting. It takes place in the last decade of twelfth century England, when **Richard the Lion Hearted** is off on his crusade, and **Longchamps**, his regent, is in power. This is the very period when **Robin Hood's** career is just beginning — he's becoming known, but he's not famous yet.

The Black Dragon is **Brian Dunreith**, an exile returning to England after twenty years. He is a notorious alchemist, widely believed to be a diabolist. In other words, he practices ancient and arcane forms of science, but has often been accused of practicing sorcery. In the series, **Dunrieth** is commissioned to put down a rebellion — but he finds out that the leader of the rebellion is one of his oldest friends. Further, he discovers that his friend employs black magic in the worst, most evil way. **Brian**, though himself highly skilled, finds himself hopelessly outclassed. The conflict of supernatural and mystical powers makes for an incredible series of confrontations!

In the course of the intrigue, **Dunreith** will discover his true nature — and that he might be what people say he is! Among all the personal drama will be romance, action, mystery — and **John** and I even managed to throw in some jousting, too, for good measure! It'll be a six-issue Epic Limited Series on high-quality paper in full color. The final dates haven't yet been set.

Magic is a recurring theme in several of the series you write. Is magic a special interest of yours?

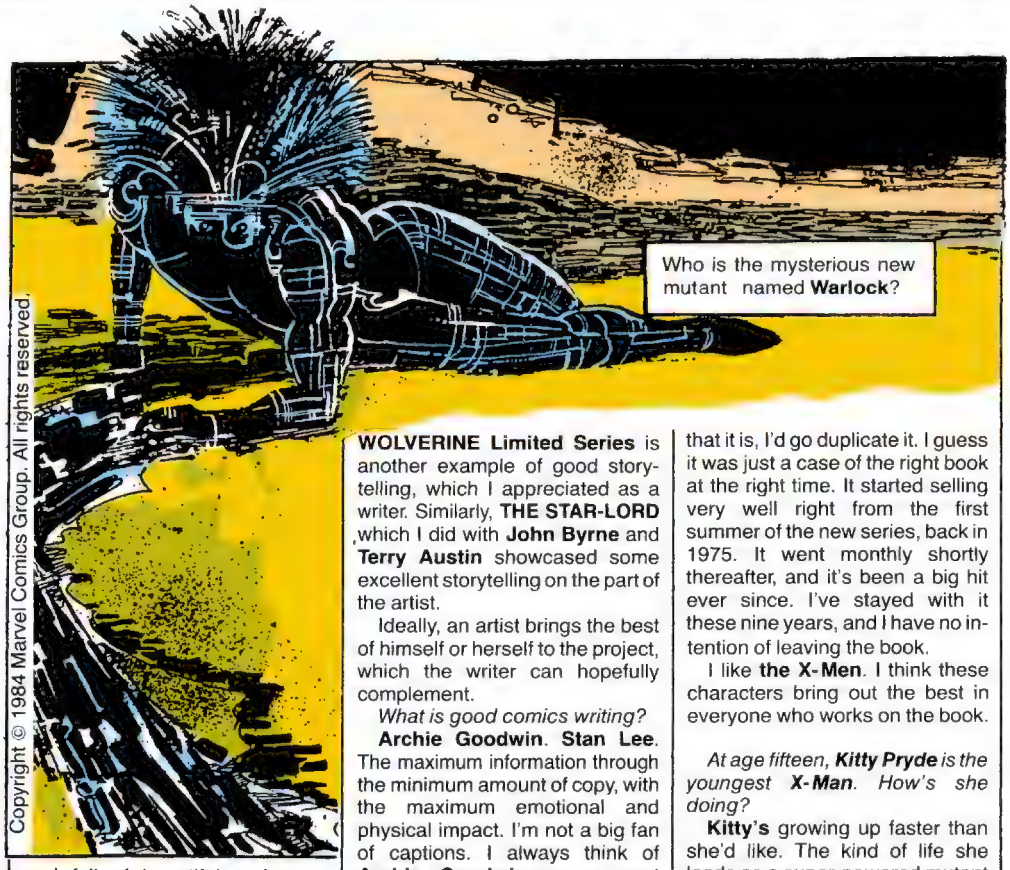
Yes. My ex-wife originally got me interested in studying magic, and I've learned about the many different types of magic that there are. There's natural magic, the kind practiced by ancient pagan religions. This is the pantheistic magic of which wicca is a subgroup. Then there's American Indian shamanist magic, which **Steve Englehart** explores in **COYOTE**. Then there's classic satanism. There are also beliefs in healing herbs, potions, fairies, and the like. Generally, when we speak of "magic," we mean the body of beliefs that pre-date Judeo-Christian monotheism. But of course, some people still in this day and age believe in magic.

Do you?

I haven't got any absolute empirical evidence, so I can't say for sure. I'll reserve judgement.

Of course, you can't say for sure — but have you ever had an experience to make you think that, perhaps, magic is at work?

Oh, sure — just looking out the window! The world that we inhabit is miraculous in its complexity,



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and full of beautiful and mysterious phenomena that we can't explain. As **Arthur Clarke** once said — and this is a bad paraphrase, so forgive me — that any civilization sufficiently advanced to achieve interstellar space flight would appear to us as magic.

*How do you enjoy working with **John Bolton**?*

John is superb to work with, despite the fact that he lives three thousand miles away! I enjoy working with him so much that I recently visited him in England to work with him face-to-face. It's better creatively, and, in the long run, cheaper, than working over the phone!

*What do you enjoy most about an artist like **John**?*

His ability to tell a story. A good artist tells the story effectively, evocatively, and cohesively. The artist sets the stage so that the writer can do what the writer does best, character and motivation.

Frank Miller's work for **the WOLVERINE Limited Series** is another example of good storytelling, which I appreciated as a writer. Similarly, **THE STAR-LORD** which I did with **John Byrne** and **Terry Austin** showcased some excellent storytelling on the part of the artist.

Ideally, an artist brings the best of himself or herself to the project, which the writer can hopefully complement.

What is good comics writing?

Archie Goodwin. **Stan Lee**. The maximum information through the minimum amount of copy, with the maximum emotional and physical impact. I'm not a big fan of captions. I always think of **Archie Goodwin** as a great example of comics writing. And, let's face it, nobody has ever written as many books as well as **Stan Lee** — and I don't think anybody ever will again.

The editor's job is to bring out the best in the creative people. Every editor has a different way of doing it. Some use charm, some use common sense, and some use terror! **Louise Jones** was one of the finest editors I had ever worked with, because, I feel, she brought out the best in me. It's all a matter of chemistry. Some editors that I've worked well with, other creative people can't get along with as well — and some editors that my fellow writers have worked splendidly with just haven't clicked with me.

*Let's talk about **THE X-MEN**. What makes **X-MEN** the most popular comic book on the stands today?*

Beats me! If I knew exactly wnat made **THE X-MEN** the success that it is, I'd go duplicate it. I guess it was just a case of the right book at the right time. It started selling very well right from the first summer of the new series, back in 1975. It went monthly shortly thereafter, and it's been a big hit ever since. I've stayed with it these nine years, and I have no intention of leaving the book.

I like **the X-Men**. I think these characters bring out the best in everyone who works on the book.

*At age fifteen, **Kitty Pryde** is the youngest **X-Man**. How's she doing?*

Kitty's growing up faster than she'd like. The kind of life she leads as a super-powered mutant who confronts danger from day to day is pretty hard for a girl her age to handle. Add to this the fact that her best friend is a demon sorceress . . .

And her other best friend is a dragon!

. . . and her other best friend is a dragon. Therein lies the story. **Kitty Pryde** and **the New Mutants** are the youngest of the group that resides at **Professor Xavier's** School for Gifted Youngsters. These are the ones to whom **Professor Xavier** is important as a teacher. Remember — the reason **Professor X** founded **the X-Men** in the first place was so that mutants could learn how best to use their super powers. The reason why the original **X-Men**, **Cyclops**, **Beast**, **Angel**, and **Iceman** left is that they grew up and no longer needed training. Nowadays, **Storm**, **Colossus**, **Wolverine**, and **Nightcrawler** have all by and large become adults —

MARIKO YASHIDA.
DAUGHTER OF ONE OF THE NOBLEST, RICHEST, MOST POWERFUL FAMILIES IN JAPAN, SHE CAN TRACE HER LINEAGE BACK ALMOST 2,000 YEARS. ME, I KNOW MY FATHER -- THAT'S AS FAR AS IT GOES.
FROM THE MOMENT WE MET, I LOVED HER. AN' SHE LOVED ME.
AIN'T LIFE A CROCK?

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but **Kitty** still needs **Xavier** as a teacher. Being a teacher is **Charles Xavier's** first, best function.

But now that **Xavier** has the use of his legs again, after so many years in a wheelchair, he wants to be a super hero! But he cannot both be a super hero fighting alongside **the X-Men** *and* have the time to teach **Kitty** and the **New Mutants** — there just aren't that many hours in a day. But the younger mutants still need instruction in the use of their powers. And if **Charles Xavier** isn't available for them, where can they go? **The Hellfire Club**? Possibly!

Conflicts will arise for **Charles Xavier** and **the X-Men** should he try to fight alongside the team. They'll have to get used to him. He's not as experienced in combat as are the active **X-Men**. On the other hand, he is a powerful telepatch, and he *is* the man who taught **the X-Men** how to fight. Ultimately, **Professor X** will have to make a choice. The events, conflicts, and emotions which lead to his decision will be the basis for several stories over the coming year. I guarantee there will be some surprises.

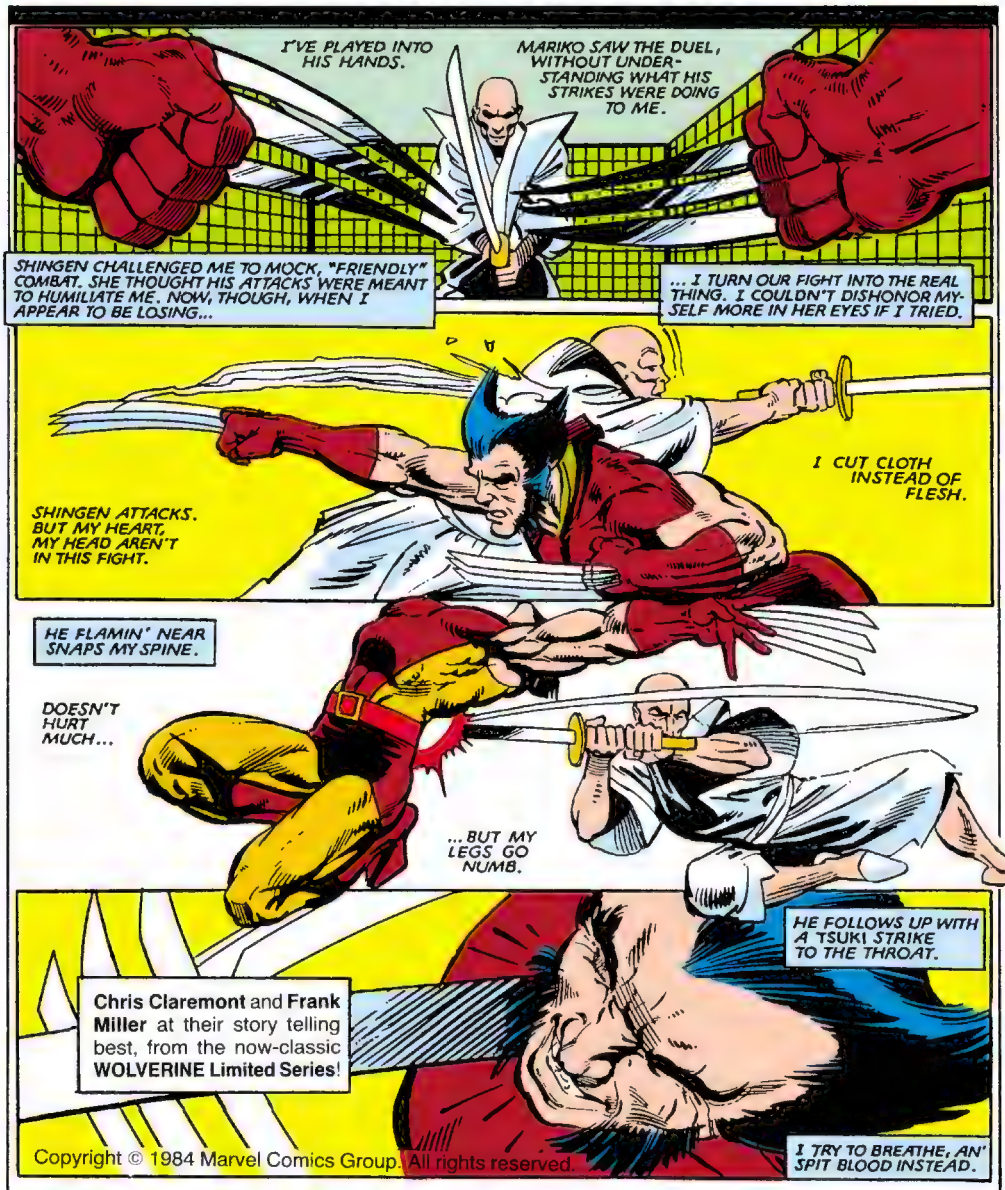
The biggest shock in the history of **the X-Men** will come two months from now, at the end of **X-MEN** #185. The following double-sized issue, as a special treat, will be penciled by **Barry Windsor-Smith** and inked by **Terry Austin**! It'll be quite a story, but unfortunately I can't tell you anything about it because the plot is predicated on the conclusion of issue #185.

Speaking of shocks, many people had a strong reaction to the recent changes in **Storm**.

Her little speech to **Kitty** in issue #180 should sum all that up. The values she grew up with just didn't work for her anymore, and she couldn't repress her feelings any longer. After years and years of holding back, she opened the flood gates, let loose her inhibitions, and went from being a serene and nearly emotionless person to quite the opposite sort.

What new things are in store?

A new member will be joining **THE NEW MUTANTS**. His name


I'VE PLAYED INTO HIS HANDS.
MARIKO SAW THE DUEL, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WHAT HIS STRIKES WERE DOING TO ME.
SHINGEN CHALLENGED ME TO MOCK, "FRIENDLY" COMBAT. SHE THOUGHT HIS ATTACKS WERE MEANT TO HUMILIATE ME. NOW, THOUGH, WHEN I APPEAR TO BE LOSING...
... I TURN OUR FIGHT INTO THE REAL THING. I COULDN'T DISHONOR MYSELF MORE IN HER EYES IF I TRIED.
SHINGEN ATTACKS. BUT MY HEART, MY HEAD AREN'T IN THIS FIGHT.
I CUT CLOTH INSTEAD OF FLESH.
HE FLAMIN' NEAR SNAPS MY SPINE.
DOESN'T HURT MUCH...
...BUT MY LEGS GO NUMB.
HE FOLLOWS UP WITH A TSUKI STRIKE TO THE THROAT.
I TRY TO BREATHE, AN' SPIT BLOOD INSTEAD.
Chris Claremont and Frank Miller at their story telling best, from the now-classic WOLVERINE Limited Series!
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is **Warlock**. He's an alien shape-changer, who can change his form into any non-living thing — a house, a car, a computer. He's what we call a techno-organic being, and whether or not he is actually a mutant is something we don't yet know. His father, a being called **the Magus**, is out to kill him. **The Magus** is incredibly powerful — the first time we meet him, he's tearing apart a star. We're talking heavy duty cosmic.

We've still got the mystery of the girl named **Rachel** to contend with, too! As you can tell, the mutants will have their hands full for the next few months.

Louise Jones *once said to me, sort of half-joking, "There are no villains in the* ***X-MEN*** *— there are only fallen heroes."*

I'd say that's about 90% true. Of course, fallen heroes make the best villains. **Doctor Doom**, for instance, has an element of nobility to him — anyone who knows **Doom's** biography can tell you that **Doom** is basically **Reed Richards** gone wrong, only he doesn't see it. Similarly, I think of **Magneto** as **Professor Xavier's** mirror image.

How much of what you write is based on personal experience?

Everything. •

The MARVEL AGE INTERVIEW:

John Romita, Jr.

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by **Mark Lerer**

How is your rendition of the ***X-Men*** *going to be different from the other artists who have drawn the book?*

First, because I'm a different person from **John Byrne**, **Dave Cockrum**, or **Paul Smith**, I have a different drawing style, so the strip is naturally going to look different. I don't intend to copy anyone else's rendition of **the X-Men**. My approach to drawing and storytelling are my own. Second, I think I have a very basic approach to storytelling, and it's probably the "plainest" and least flashy of anyone's. I'm sure I haven't emulated anyone else's way of doing **the X-Men**.

Sometimes an artist will start on a book with the idea of doing different or stylized versions of the characters. I stayed away from that when I began penciling **THE X-MEN**. My attitude was just to get the job done on time and make the finished product look good — just be a professional and do the best I can. Now, as I continued to work on the book I became more fluid with the characters. I no longer need reference to draw them, and they've become natural for me.

Do you feel that the book is "yours" yet?

Yes. I remember when it happened, too — when I first felt that the book was my own. About three or four issues after **Dan Green** took over as inker, the book started to look consistent from issue to issue. We were both getting comfortable with **THE X-MEN** together, and when **Dan** got ready, I got ready. And now we've got the book down, I'd say. It's funny — when I first took the book over, I got a lot of letters and comments from fans who just hated getting used to a new artist. It's understandable. But **Dan** and I are really beginning to click now.

What do you think of ***Dan*** *as an inker?*

I think he's terrific. First of all, he's an excellent artist in his own right. He has a command of all the line qualities an inker must use. **Dan's** line can be strong when necessary; it can be fine when necessary. He does great special effects, too. Some inkers like to

specialize in one particular kind of inkline — a bold line, or an intricate line, or a **Neal Adams**-type cross-hatching. But **Dan Green** has everything. It makes it a pleasure to work with him. He's as good an inker as there is in the business.

Dan inked the first complete comic book story that I ever did, you know! That was **IRON MAN** #115.

*Do you assist **Chris Claremont** in the plotting?*

No, I don't help **Chris** plot the stories. **Chris** has such a strong sense of what to do with the storylines that I don't see myself assisting in the plotting for a long, long time. He's got so many ideas in his head — the guy's incredible! He and **Ann** have asked me several times to sit in on plotting sessions, and for one reason or another I haven't been able to make it. Once or twice I've contributed a small piece of storytelling, more in my role as artist than as any kind of co-plotter.

Tell us about it.

There's a scene in issue #183 that I love. **Juggernaut** and **Colossus** get involved in a barroom brawl. Now, I like to go to bars and clubs, and, you know, nightlife, so right away I was into drawing this scene. I based it on an actual bar in my neighborhood that a friend of mine owns. I had a perfect vision of how I wanted it to look. I knew the setting — exactly where everyone stands, just what elements would convey the right atmosphere, the kinds of characters who hang out there. I even drew in some of the regulars I know who frequent this particular bar! Then **Chris** came up with the idea of having the table get more crowded with empty bottles as time passed — and because I know so well how that kind of scene looks in real life, I could draw it down to the detail on the ashtray! I got to work like a movie director on that sequence.

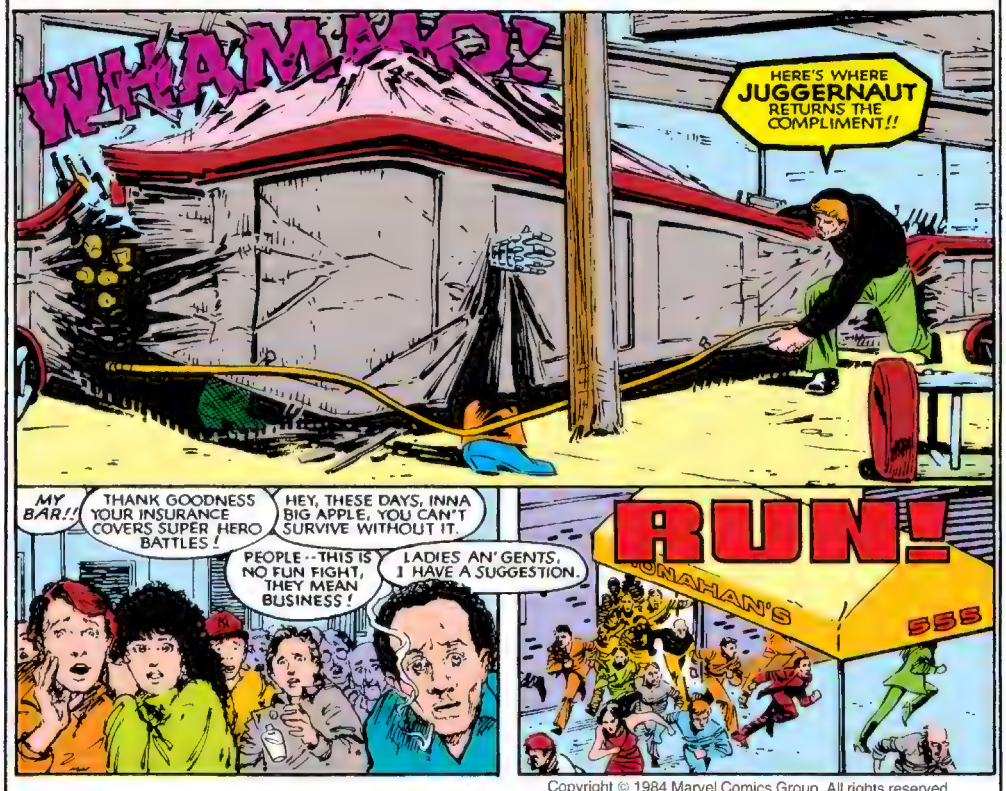
I like that bit, too, for another reason. It was fun seeing **the X-Men** sitting in a bar. Seeing those fantasy characters behaving in a normal light — drinking beer and having a good time just like you and me — made them seem all the more real.

*Do you remember that scene from way back when the original **X-Men** had to get on the subway to get where they were going, and all the people in the crowd stared at them?*

You bet! That had a lot of the same feeling.

*Let's go from super heroes in real life situations to **John Romita, Jr.** in real life situations. As the artist who draws **THE X-MEN** and who did **SPIDER-MAN**, I'll bet you're a bit of a celebrity in your neighborhood in Queens, New York.*

Yeah! It all started with the


WHAM-O!
HERE'S WHERE JUGGERNAUT RETURNS THE COMPLIMENT!!
MY BAR!!
THANK GOODNESS YOUR INSURANCE COVERS SUPER HERO BATTLES!
HEY, THESE DAYS, INNA BIG APPLE, YOU CAN'T SURVIVE WITHOUT IT.
PEOPLE--THIS IS NO FUN FIGHT, THEY MEAN BUSINESS!
LADIES AN' GENTS, I HAVE A SUGGESTION.
RUN!
555

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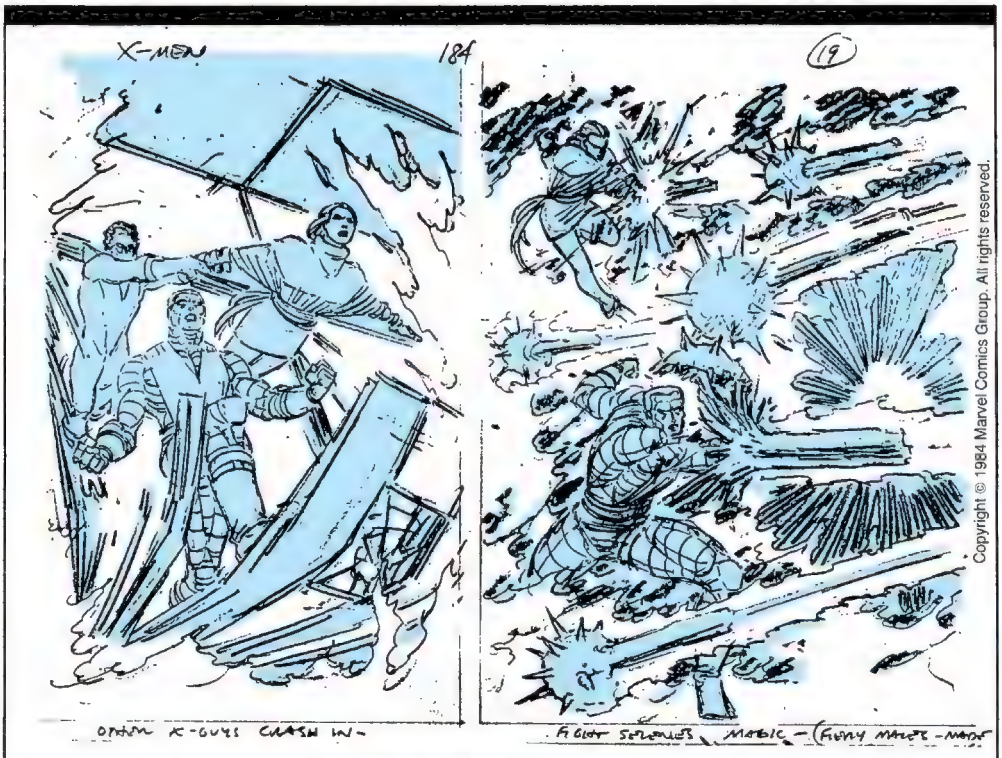

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paperboy. One day he asked me, "How come you're always home?" Once I explained to him the kind of work I did, I started getting a lot of visitors around my house! The neighborhood kids are really pleasant, and I just love that stuff. It's so flattering! Then, after a while, it was the same thing with the mailman, the storekeepers — they'd say to me, how come you're always home? What are you, independently wealthy? So I'd say I work at home. They'd say, what do you do? I'm an artist. What kind of artist? Then it got out — **Spider-Man! The X-Men!** As I say, it's flattering. I enjoy it.

How do you work on a story? Go step by step with us. What do you do after you receive the plot from the writer?

The first thing I do is read through the plot to see what kind of reference I'm going to need. Then I'll spend half a day to a day gathering the reference — going to bookstores, for example, to find books which have photographs of unfamiliar things I'll have to draw. I'm big on doing this part myself, because I like to hunt down and get exactly what I know I'll need. If I absolutely can't find what I'm looking for then I'll call **Ann** and **Peter**, but going out and researching the reference is one of my favorite parts of the job.

So that's the first day. The next day, I thumbnail. This stage is just putting in the panel borders and written descriptions of what goes in each panel. Some artists like to lay the story out on typing paper first, but I do it right on the full-size board. I call this stage "panel-sizing it out." I'm not even thinking small yet. Panel-sizing out the story is the most difficult part, because it involves the most brainwork. I generally try to spread the action out evenly throught the twenty-two pages of story. A big action climax usually takes a big panel, for example. The action-less scenes, which are sometimes the most interesting, are tougher — they have to be paced just right. Later, if I want to get fancy, I'll throw in some exotic panel shapes.

Once the story is paneled out, I start the actual drawing. I'll lay out several pages and then tighten them up, then I'll lay out several more pages and tighten them up, and so on until the story's done. Breaking down and tightening — those are the terms I use.

Are the penciled pages that are reproduced in ***THE OFFICIAL MARVEL COMICS TRY-OUT BOOK*** *a good example of what your penciled pages look like?*

Yes, they're very representative of my work.

What are all those little notes alongside each panel?

I've got to tell you about those little notes! The artist puts them in just to make what's happening absolutely clear, as a guide for the writer. At first, I *hated* putting in those little notes because it was such a chore. But then, to make it a less painful and boring part of the job, I started putting in little jokes, little ribald remarks and gag insults to have some fun with the writer. Now I love doing the little notes . . . in fact, now I even *look forward* to writing the little notes! I can write in things that the charac-

ters could never really say . . . you get the idea! I hope **Chris** likes 'em!

What's your advice to people who want to become comic book artists?

A lot of kids make the mistake of trying to enter comics as their first field right after high school. They don't realize that most comics professionals started elsewhere or worked in another field for a while, and have a wide range of drawing experience. Going straight from high school to comics is hard. Better get as much training as you can. I learned a hell of a lot in college. I was an advertising major at Farmingdale University out on Long Island. I got the full curriculum, from graphic design to life drawing. Drawing the nude model is invaluable. Anatomy, perspective, *all* those things that appear in backgrounds you'll have to know how to draw . . . you really have to be proficient *before* you try to enter the field.

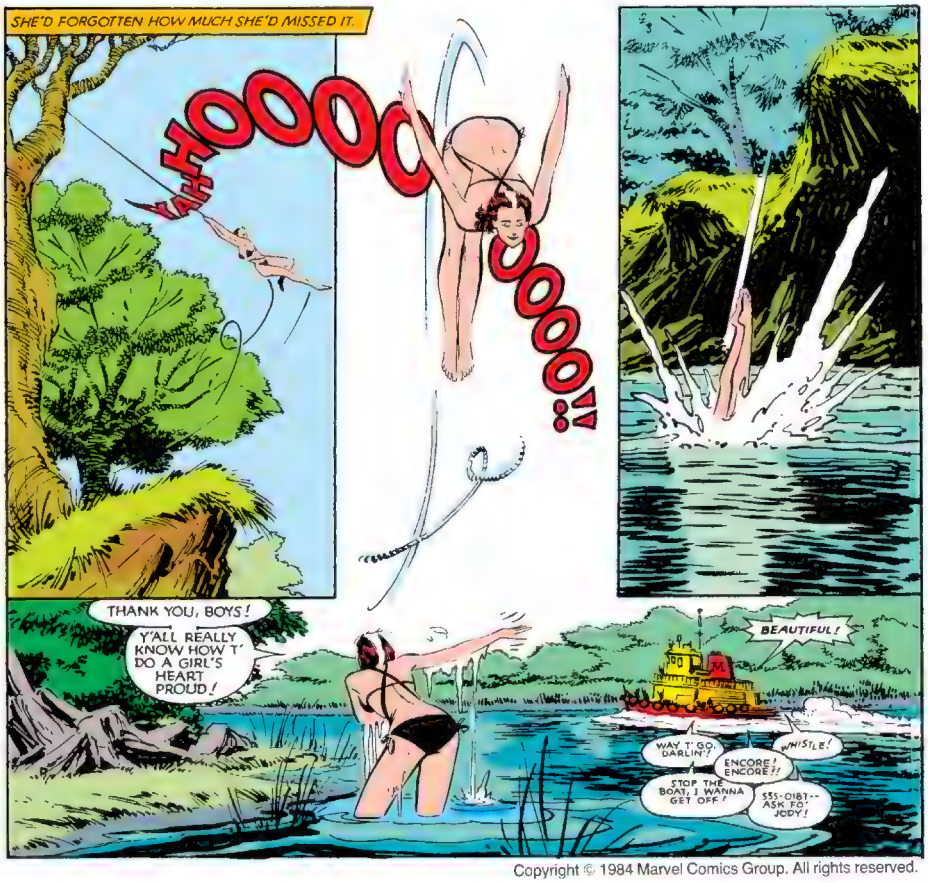
*How long are you going to stay with **THE X-MEN**?*

Forever! I can't see ever getting tired of it. I never get tired of a project that I'm working on.

Really? If only everybody were like that!

Well, it's true with me. I started out drawing **IRON MAN**, which I loved doing and never got tired of — but I had a very exciting opportunity when I was offered **SPIDER-MAN**. That was a challenge I couldn't resist. I loved doing **SPIDER-MAN**; I never got tired of it, either — but when I was offered a chance to draw **THE X-MEN** about a year ago, it seemed like an even more interesting opportunity, with the challenge of drawing so many different characters. And

Check out the range and beauty of **John Romita Jr.** and **Dan Green's** artwork — in this scene from an upcoming **X-Men** adventure spotlighting **Rogue**!


SHE'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH SHE'D MISSED IT.
AAHHOOOOOOOOOO!!
THANK YOU, BOYS!
Y'ALL REALLY KNOW HOW T' DO A GIRL'S HEART PROUD!
BEAUTIFUL!
WHISTLE!
WAY T' GO, DARLIN'!
ENCORE! ENCORE!!
STOP THE BOAT, I WANNA GET OFF!
555-0187-- ASK FOR JODY!

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I wasn't worried about **Spidey** — he'll be popular whether I draw his adventures or someone else does!

*I've got to ask you — what was it like drawing **SPIDER-MAN**? What did you enjoy the most about that book?*

The rooftops! They make the greatest setting an artist could ask for. First of all, I had an excuse to go out and buy a lot of reference, including all those great books of photographs of New York City. I learned that there's basically a set pattern to rooftops, with practice I could draw them from memory, and I developed my own vision of Manhattan. New York is my hometown, and I love it. Drawing the exciting, atmospheric New York City scenes — greatest part of doing **SPIDER-MAN**.

What was the worst part?

Those damn webs!

Seriously? There was a difficult side to the rooftops business. When you're drawing a strip that takes place in New York, you can't fake it. The setting is real, and you've got to draw it accurately. With a science fiction strip, you can make things up however you like. But when **Spidey's** going through Times Square at rush hour, and you've got to draw every single car, building, and pedestrian, it sure can be a pain!

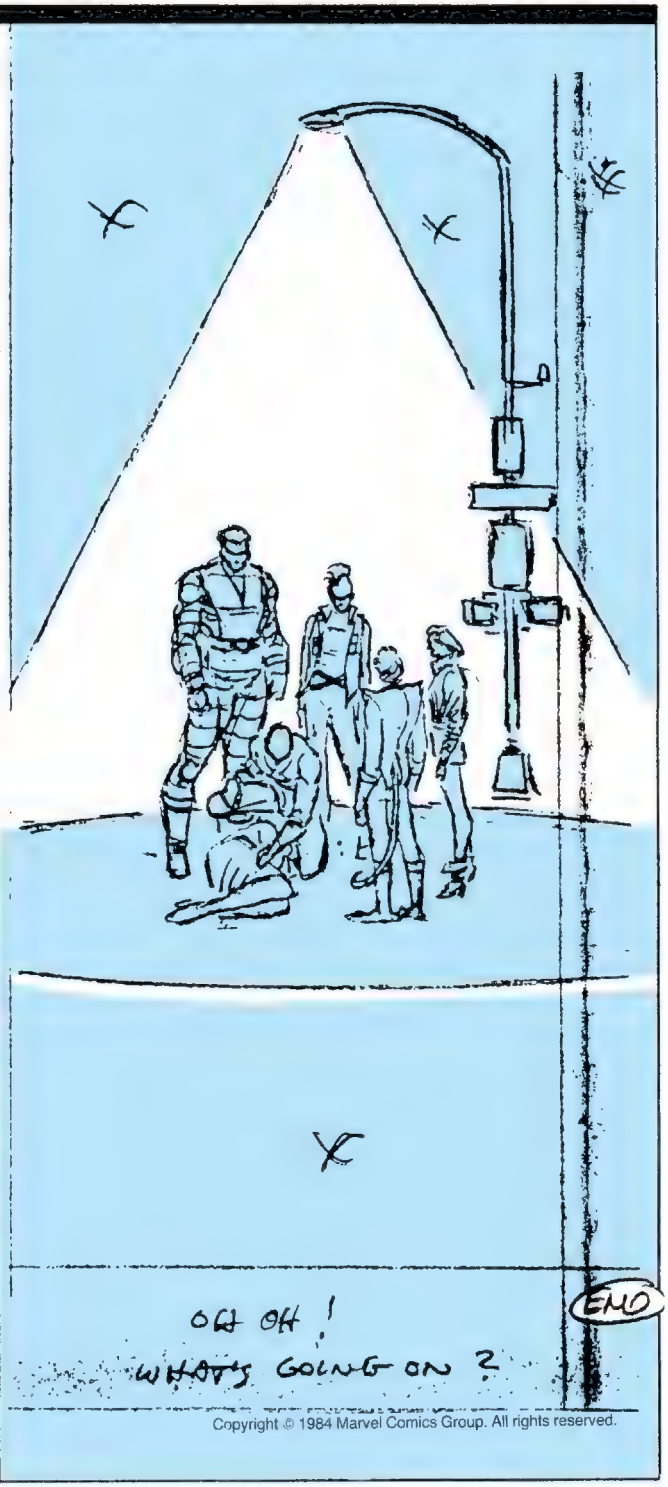
The rewarding, and at the same time hard, part of doing that book is that you have to draw from life.

*I'd imagine that **X-MEN**, being a more science fiction oriented strip, doesn't present that problem.*

I've got news for you! Soon **the X-Men** are going to be traveling to Dallas — and to Africa — and I'm back drawing from life again!

How would you sum up your experience in comics?

Comics are fun. I'm having so much fun making a living the way I do that I couldn't see myself doing anything else. I hope everyone in the industry is having as good a time as I am. I think that when the creators are really enjoying what they're doing it shows in the product. *That's* when you pick up a comic and it isn't just another comic book — it's a piece of reading material that makes you smile. ●



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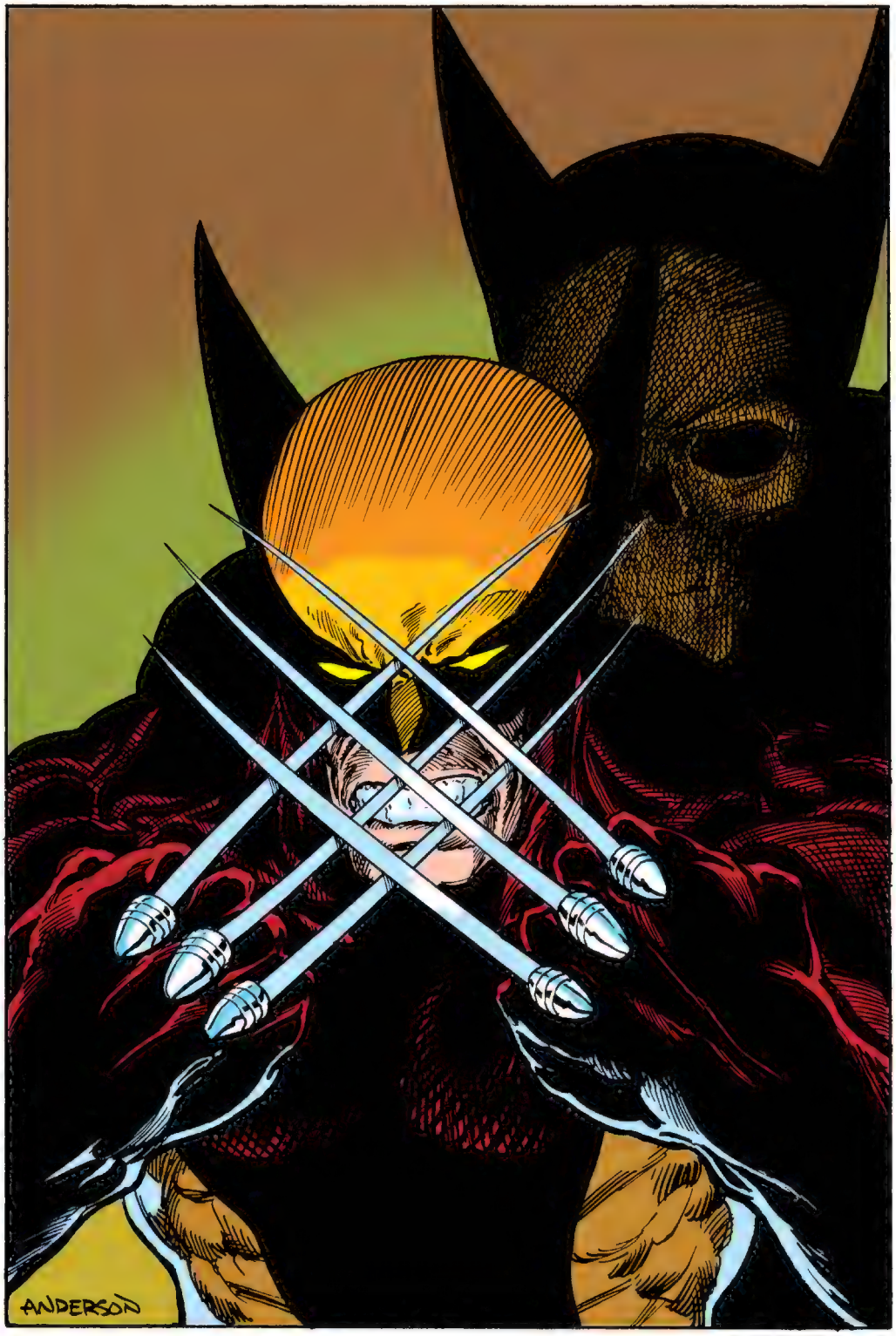
Dazzler pinup by Bill Sienkiewicz
from *Marvel Fanfare* #8 (May 1983)

Wolverine pinup by Butch Guice
from *Marvel Fanfare* #9 (July 1983)

Kitty Pryde pinup by Butch Guice
from *Marvel Fanfare* #9 (July 1983)

Wolverine pinup by Brent Anderson
from *Marvel Fanfare* #10 (August 1983)



Storm pinup by Rick Leonardi
from *Marvel Fanfare* #12 (January 1984)

BIOGRAPHIES

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It is hard to remember a time when the word "mutant" didn't correspond with the largest and most ardently followed franchise in comics, but in the mid-'70s the X-Men were naught but a forgotten team of misfits. Chris Claremont and his collaborators took this moribund property and issue by issue transformed it into a phenomenon now known the world over.

Claremont began his career in comics in the early '70s pitching in on issues of *Avengers*, *Daredevil* and *Incredible Hulk*, while also delivering several text stories to Marvel's black-and-white magazines. His first regular writing gig was *War Is Hell*, a "weird war" title that came to a close just as his run on *X-Men* and *Iron Fist* began. *Iron Fist*, which rolled out of the pages of *Marvel Premiere*, was done in concert with artist John Byrne, forming a key partnership that would pay big dividends later. Other high-profile projects from Claremont's first full decade in comics included *Marvel Preview*'s Starlord, *Ms. Marvel*, *Marvel Team-Up* (again with Byrne) and *John Carter: Warlord of Mars*.

But it was in the pages of *X-Men* where Claremont would change comics history. In tandem with artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Claremont helped build a cornerstone franchise for Marvel. After writer Len Wein launched the newly updated series in 1975 with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, Claremont was tasked with guiding the new adventures of the mutant misfits, and he did so by crafting layered stories that balanced crisp dialogue with high-octane action. Claremont placed a premium on characterization, a lofty goal in a team book with many players, but he did so deftly enough to spin a wide-ranging tapestry of characters, each of whom became fan favorites.

Leading breathless fans down the path of classics including "The Dark Phoenix Saga," "Days of Future Past," and *God Loves, Man Kills*, he helped build such an intense loyalty that it only made sense to spin-off the X-Men's success into new books. The first such spin-off was *The New Mutants*. Later in the decade, Claremont launched *Excalibur* with Alan Davis and established a regular series for Wolverine with John Buscema.

In 1990, he launched a new sister title for the main team of mutants with Jim Lee; *X-Men* #1 premiered to numbers that made it the highest-selling comic ever. After a long break from the company, Claremont returned to Marvel in 2000, and over the next ten years wrote the novelization of Bryan Singer's X-Men film, took on the Fantastic Four, and charted the adventures of Marvel's mutants across a variety of titles. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame with its 2015 class.

JOHN ROMITA JR.

Like his legendary father, John Romita Jr. has become a comic-art master, establishing a powerful style uniquely his own. His life in comics began early, when as an adolescent he helped his father design the Spider-Man villain the Prowler. His first published work—cover art for Marvel UK and "Chaos at the Coffee Bean!" in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #11—showed that he'd learned much from his father's figure drawing and storytelling sense. His first full-length project was a KISS feature in *Marvel Super-Special* #5. In the summer of 1978, he began a years long parternship on *Iron Man* with David Michelinie and Bob Layton. It was during his first *Iron Man* break that Romita Jr. took on full-time art duties on *Amazing Spider-Man* for the first of multiple acclaimed runs. During his Spidey tenure he also helped launch *Dazzler* and penciled the first Marvel miniseries, *Marvel Super Hero Contest of Champions*. In 1983, Romita Jr. joined Chris Claremont's *Uncanny X-Men*, taking over the industry's most popular comic for a three-year run that saw his art dramatically evolve in tone. After a stint on the New Universe series *Starbrand*, he rebounded with a pair of *Amazing Spider-Man* issues that included Peter Parker's proposal to Mary Jane Watson. Next, Romita Jr. began a run on *Daredevil* with writer Ann Nocenti, introducing Typhoid Mary and establishing himself as one of the definitive *Daredevil* artists. After a third run on *Iron Man*, his credits included *Punisher War Zone*, *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear* with Frank Miller, a return to *Uncanny X-Men*, and long runs on *Spider-Man*, *Thor* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*. As the new century dawned, the ever more popular Romita Jr. kept adding to his superstar resume with stints on *Amazing Spider-Man* with J. Michael Straczynski, *Wolverine* with Mark Millar, *Eternals* with Neil Gaiman, and the *World War Hulk* event. His collaboration with Millar spawned their creator-owned series *Kick-Ass*, which led to a blockbuster feature film. In recent years, he has returned once more to *Amazing Spider-Man*, helped relaunch *Avengers* with Brian Michael Bendis and *Captain America* with Rick Remender, and contributed to the blockbuster crossover *Avengers vs. X-Men*.

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

A brash newcomer to the American comics scene in the late '60s, London-born Barry Windsor-Smith rose from drawing his first American comics work on a New York City park bench to become one of the medium's most influential artists, driving his passion for pre-Raphaelite naturalism and Art Nouveau design into mainstream comics.

Influenced from an early age by artists like Jack Kirby and Gil Kane, Windsor-Smith made it a goal to one day work for Marvel Comics. His first professional forays produced artwork for *X-Men*, *Daredevil* and *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, all of which revealed a young man ardently working to define his own voice while mastering the lessons of his artistic forebears.

He first stepped out in a big way on *Conan the Barbarian,* Marvel's adaptation of Robert E. Howard's sword and sorcery character. It was here that Windsor-Smith developed a stunningly fresh approach to comic-art draftsmanship, holding on to Kirby's dynamic energy but pouring an increasing amount of time into detailed, lyrical figure drawing. As his skills developed, it became clear that Windsor-Smith's work on *Conan* was a clarion call for comic artists who wanted to take a more refined approach to their illustration.

In addition to making Conan into a bona fide hit, Windsor-Smith also turned in memorable work on *Avengers*, Doctor Strange in *Marvel Premiere* and Ka-Zar in *Astonishing Tales*, after which he started Gorblimey Press, his own studio that produced original prints and stories entirely of his own making, a concern that is still ongoing today.

A return to Marvel in 1984 produced a handful of projects that made a huge impression: a Machine Man limited series; the groundbreaking excursion into Wolverine's origin, "Weapon X"; "Lifedeath," a pair of timeless Storm stories told in *Uncanny*

X-Men, and a myriad of classic covers, including several for *Conan Saga*.

In 1991, Windsor-Smith took on the role of creative director for Valiant Comics, an upstart company formed by former Marvel editor in chief Jim Shooter. The Valiant line, including Windsor-Smith's *Archer and Armstrong*, *Solar: Man of the Atom* and *Unity*, was a big hit in part to Windsor-Smith's masterful work. His most recent regular work was in Malibu Comics' *Rune*, Dark Horse's *BWS: Storyteller* anthology and his series of autobiographical art books, *Opus*. His accomplishments within the field were recognized by the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2008.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

SAL BUSCEMA

Without a doubt one of comics' most prolific artists, "Our Pal" Sal Buscema joined Marvel in 1968 shortly after his elder brother, John. Tackling inking duties on *Silver Surfer* and *Fantastic Four*, including the all-time classic *Silver Surfer* #4, Buscema quickly graduated to penciling. He was an anchor of the Marvel line in the 1970s with long runs on books like *Captain America*, *Marvel Team-Up* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and a 100-plus issue run on *The Incredible Hulk*. Buscema was also behind defining the tone on early issues of *The Defenders*, *Rom* and *The New Mutants*. His career as one of Marvel's most versatile artists lasted throughout the '70s and into the '90s. In 1988, he returned to *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and over the next ten years penciled every issue but two from #134 through #238 (and inked the vast majority as well!) Although he retired in the late '90s, readers can still see his name on comics credits from time to time, including inking work on the cult hit *Spider-Girl*.

RON FRENZ

Few can match Ron Frenz when it comes to consistency and longevity as an artist. He notched accomplished runs on the field's two most revered and influential characters, Spider-Man and Superman, and carried each through controversial new costume designs. When the 22-year-old broke into the industry, he began as co-penciler of *Ka-Zar the Savage*, and then *Star Wars*. Proving himself on those books, Frenz succeeded John Romita Jr. on *Amazing Spider-Man*, his artwork channeling Steve Ditko's original web-slinger. Next, he joined Tom DeFalco on a six-year-long run on *Thor* with a new look and identity for Marvel's Thunder God. Their efforts led to *Thunderstrike*, a spin-off title featuring Eric Masterson, and the creation of the New Warriors. After an influential run on DC's *Superman*, Frenz returned to Marvel to team with DeFalco on the launch of the MC2 Universe, home of Spider-Girl, the fan-favorite Marvel heroine, for which he drew dozens of issues right up to her final miniseries, *Spectacular Spider-Girl*. In 2001, Frenz joined Kurt Busiek and Erik Larsen on their revival of *The Defenders*, and was part of the jam unit that drew the Lee/Kirby homage *Fantastic Four: The World's Greatest Comics Magazine*. His most recent project is the 2013 IDW revival of *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* with series originator Larry Hama.

CRAIG HAMILTON

An art talent born, raised and still residing in Macon, GA, Craig Hamilton's style of fantasy realism caused a sensation in late '80s. As a teen, he began a private art tutelage under Southern art legend Houser Smith, alongside Macon peers and future comic artists Tony Harris and Ray Snyder. After a single year of studies at the Atlanta College of Art, Hamilton nailed his first professional work at the age of 22, when his audacious drawings of a newly designed Aquaman rocked a four-issue *Aquaman* limited series and marked him as a rising star. For Marvel, Hamilton drew multiple character studies for the *Official Handbook* series, contributed pinups and an X-Men story to *Marvel Fanfare* (wherein his model for Storm was a pre-fame RuPaul), and took part in Charles Vess' graphic novel adaptation of the film *Hook*. In the late '80s, Hamilton embarked on a frustrating journey with his adaptation of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy*, with five years of elaborately crafted work scuttled after the project was infamously canceled by the publisher. Following that disappointment, Hamilton turned primarily to commercial illustration, but still filed comic work at DC Comics on issues of *Starman*, *Green Lantern* and *The Spectre*. He also drew issues of Bill Willingham's *Fables*, as well as the *Fables* graphic novels *The Last Castle* and *Werewolves of the Heartland*. Still active as an artist, Hamilton busies himself with painting, commercial illustration and backdrop design.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS LIBRARY

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IRON FIST VOLS. 1-2
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MARVEL TEAM-UP VOLS. 1-2
MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE VOL. 1
THE MIGHTY THOR VOLS. 1-15
MS. MARVEL VOLS. 1-2
NICK FURY, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. VOLS. 1-3
NOT BRAND ECHH VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

RAWHIDE KID VOLS. 1-2
SGT. FURY VOLS. 1-4
SPIDER-WOMAN VOL. 1
THE SILVER SURFER VOLS. 1-2
THE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-7
WARLOCK VOLS. 1-2
THE X-MEN VOLS. 1-8
THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-10

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
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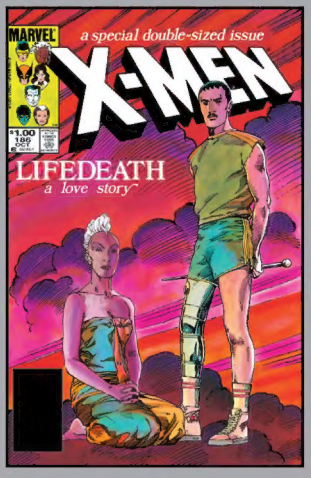
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1



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